

## Explanation of Environment Rating Scale Terms and Value Words

*This document is a consolidation of definitions used in the Environment Rating Scales (ERS). It includes feedback from the Environment Rating Scales Institute (ERSI) author and discussion from the May 27–29, 2015, Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge (RTT–ELC) ERS Anchor Work Group meeting. This document is intended to enhance assessors’ understanding of definitions and should be used with ERSI’s Notes for Clarifications and definitions within tool-specific Rating Scales and All About ERS Books. Assessors should insert this document into their scoring materials.*

Term	Definition	Scale			Examples (Across Scales)
		ECERS	FCCERS	ITERS	
<b>Accessible</b>	Children can reach and use for a minimum amount of time based on program day	✓	✓	✓	<p>Materials are within view of younger children (2s and 3s). For older children (4s and 5s), materials can be stored out of view if free access and use of the materials is observed. (They are seen getting materials on their own.) There can be no barriers or prohibitions against the free access to and use of materials for at least the minimum amount of time required for “accessible” as listed in the tool’s introduction (which is generally one-eighth of the program day).</p> <p>Time children spend cleaning up or waiting cannot be considered toward required time.</p> <p>ITERS only – Materials must be moved or brought to non-mobile infants to provide access, as appropriate, or based on child’s expressed interest.</p>
<b>All</b>	No exceptions	✓	✓	✓	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ECERS Item 11, Indicator 5.3: <b>“All cots or mats are at least 3 feet apart.”</b></li> <li>• FCCERS Item 1, Indicator 5.3: <b>“Space for children is accessible to <i>all</i> children and adults with disabilities currently using child care space.”</b></li> </ul>

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<b>Alternate Activities</b>		✓	✓		Either the teacher says something that prompts a change of choice or a child gets up and goes elsewhere without being stopped. It is permissible for teachers to limit where children go due to capacity of area as long as children have another option. Assume choice is available unless you hear the teacher do otherwise (e.g., stop a child from choice).
<b>Appropriate</b>	Suitable for the developmental level of the group and the abilities of the children.	✓	✓	✓	Relates to age, ability, and impulsivity of children present at observation.  In mixed-age groups, requires a wider range of materials for meaningful use by each age group; all accessible materials must be safe for younger children.
<b>And</b>	Inclusive, both	✓	✓	✓	Recommend highlighting when appears in rating scales.
<b>Disinfecting</b>	Destroying germs	✓	✓	✓	Use on surfaces in contact with bodily fluids (e.g., diaper changing surfaces, toilets, and handles).  Disinfectant must be registered with EPA as a disinfectant. (A common disinfectant is a bleach solution.) Must follow disinfectant's manufacturer's instructions, which may require it be left on a surface for a minimum time.
<b>Enough</b>	One for each child or children can use without waiting.	✓	✓	✓	"Enough" is relative to the number of children in the group. For example:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One for each child – FCCERS Item 2, Indicator 3.1: "<i>Enough Furniture for routine care.</i>" includes one hook per child for jackets and backpacks.</li> </ul>

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Without waiting – ECERS Item 8, Indicator 5.1: <i>“There is enough gross motor equipment so that children have access without a long wait.”</i></li> </ul>
<b>Hand Washing</b>	Hand hygiene	✓	✓	✓	<p>Assessors should tape the process into the Scoring Books to remember the procedure and process. In mixed-age groups, see ECERS and ITERS for applicable requirements for age groups present.</p> <p>Hand sanitizer can be used in place of full procedure by adults and children over 2 years of age when hands are not visibly dirty and materials are not wet or moist (such as water table or play dough). Manufacturer’s instructions must be followed and very close supervision must be provided.</p>
<b>Insufficient</b>	Refers to both quantity and use	✓	✓	✓	<p>In quantity – not enough for all (see ‘enough’) or without undue wait.</p> <p>In use – not functional due to limitations of space or capacity. Commonly occurs at the 1 and 3 levels.</p>
<b>Labels</b>		✓	✓	✓	<p>Word labels alone do not meet the criteria for “meaningful to the children.” Labels must be understandable to age group such as pictures of items or matching symbols or colors on item and on shelf.</p> <p>For example, in fine motor (ECERS and FCCERS) almost all shelves and materials need to be labeled to encourage self-help. For room arrangement, the purpose is for independent use. Labeling is not required in all areas.</p>

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<b>Many</b>	Defined within items	✓	✓	✓	Recommend highlighting each time the word appears.
<b>No</b>	None	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Or</b>	Any combination is acceptable	✓	✓	✓	Recommend highlighting every time “or” is used because this can make a difference at the 3 or 5 point levels.
<b>Provider</b>	Adult directly involved with the children		✓		Used in FCCERS. When more than one adult is present, consider all adults who interact with children daily (or almost daily) for much of the day when scoring.
<b>Provision</b>		✓	✓	✓	Have to have materials or capacity to do the activity indicated. It is not necessary for children to have access during observation or that children use the provision (see All About ECERS p. 231 for sand/water detail).
<b>Sanitizing</b>	Reducing germs	✓	✓	✓	Used in relation to food contact surfaces and mouthed objects.  Tables must be cleaned and sanitized (two steps) in accordance with ERSI instructions and instructions on sanitizing agents. Sanitizer may require it be left on a surface for a minimum length of time before wiping (often two minutes). Some sanitizers require rinsing.
<b>Some</b>	Defined within indicator	✓	✓	✓	Amounts vary for different items. Consider requirements at the parallel indicators.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If inadequate is defined within the item to mean zero (none), then “some” means “one or more.” For example:</li> </ul>

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ECERS Item 7, Indicator 3.1: “<i>Some space outdoors or indoors used for gross motor/physical play,</i>” compared to 1.1, “<i>No outdoor or indoor space used for gross motor/physical play.</i>” Note clarification for amount of time space must be available for credit.</li> <li>○ ECERS Item 7, Indicator 7.2: “<i>Outdoor areas has some protection from the elements</i>” is clarified in notes as “<i>at least one example of protection from the elements must be observed to give credit for 7.2 but the protection observed must match the most prevalent adverse conditions caused by the elements in the local area.</i>”</li> <li>• If a plural is used, the term “some” means “more than one.”</li> <li>• Often, “some” is defined within the clarifications. For example, FCCERS, Item 14, Indicator 3.2: “<i>Some encouragement of children’s communication,</i>” is defined in the notes for clarification as “<i>at least half the time throughout the observation.</i>”</li> </ul>
<b>Staff</b>		✓		✓	Be aware of the definition within key terms. Staff includes volunteers and other adults that work with children daily or almost daily for a substantial portion of the day, if they have significant influence with children. Specialists or aides working one-on-one are not considered staff.
<b>Substantial Portion of the Day (SPOD)</b>	At least one-third of the time children are in	✓			Calculate based on what is observed and ask questions to form a reasonable estimate of what happens and what is accessible for time periods not observed. Tape calculation chart from tool-specific All About Book into rating scale for easy use.



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	attendance				Time children spend cleaning up or waiting cannot be considered toward required time.
<b>Usually and Generally</b>	Typically 75 percent	✓	✓	✓	Specific numbers are attached to some indicators. If no number is indicated, use 75 percent.
<b>Varied</b>		✓	✓	✓	Defined within each item.
<b>Weather Permitting</b>		✓	✓	✓	Almost every day unless health advisory indicates hazard (e.g., heat or cold that may cause health issues). Determination of “weather permitting” should not be determined by individual or adult preferences.