

Experimental Education Unit  
Staff Orientation Handout:



EEU OT Basics

Time in the Gym needs to be safe, fun and productive!

Safety

If you are assigned to an area or activity and you need to leave or your attention can not be fully on the area or activity please **communicate and confirm with the OT** that you can not supervise the area. If for some reason you are not able to communicate with the OT it is your responsibility to make the area safe for example take down the swing, turn the climber on its side or stow the scooter boards.

Fun

Be engaging, interactive and enthusiastic about the activities that you are in charge of. The kids will read your level of involvement and will not be excited about ball play or standing on one foot unless you are.

Productive

The activities and equipment were chosen to target developmentally appropriate skills and the motor goals of specific children's IEPs. At the beginning of the gym time the OT will communicate or demonstrate the activity or equipment please try to lead the activity the same way or ask your OT for direction if it is not going well or is particularly challenging for a child.

Other things to remember-

Swings: swings need to remain over the mat surfaces while they are being pushed and ask kids to communicate when they are getting on or off and never divide your attention.

Dizzy Discs and Gym spins- Children need to be on their tummies or on their bottoms- never standing.

Somersaults- Children with Down syndrome and children with low muscle tone can be at risk for injuries due to neck instability and these children should not participate in activities that put pressure on their head or neck unless information is provided by the school nurse clearing them for these activities.

Assisting children to standing- Small arms and shoulders especially in children with low muscle tone can be easily dislocated. As you help children up and down

provide assistance by supporting their trunk under their arms (arm pits), or at the hips. Avoid assisting children from sitting to standing by pulling on their arms or shoulders.

### Classroom skills

Preschool is the first introduction that many children have to scissors, markers and pencils- tools that they will use for many school years to come...

Scissors- Remember to help kids position their fingers in the correct holes and with their thumbs up (both the hand holding the paper and the hand that is working the scissors). Highlighting the cutting line with a contrasting color and precutting some or almost all of a project can be helpful. If you need to provide more physical assistance sit at the level of the child and assist from behind so that they can see what is happening when you are helping them cut.

Coloring/writing- Using short thick pieces of crayon or chalk or short stubby markers can help children learn to use a three fingered (tripod) grasp. Encourage children to hold the paper down with their non-writing hand. Placing the paper or project on the wall or easel can also help kids use the ends of the fingers to hold paint brushes or markers with a tripod grasp.

*If you need any assistance with supporting a child with a difficult motor task, problem solving something that isn't going well or you have a good idea that will help communicate with your classroom team and OT.*