UNIT 30  PLANNING THE CURRICULUM

Structure

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30.1 INTRODUCTION

From the reading of the first six Blocks of this Course, you have gained an understanding of the child's early development. You know about the physical growth that takes place and the changes in the nature of thinking that occur from one stage of childhood to the next, the milestones in the acquisition of language and the ways in which the child learns to relate to people and to express emotions. The purpose of describing physical, motor, cognitive, language, social and emotional development was to help you to plan suitable play activities. You have read about the play activities in the earlier Blocks and, at each point, we have related the play activity to the abilities that are being enhanced through it. You have also read how to plan a play activity—you must be clear about the goal of the activity, its content and the materials needed for it.

What remains to be discussed is how to actually organize a day care centre or a preschool centre. In this Unit we will read about one of the aspects of organization. This is — planning the curriculum. What do we mean by the term 'curriculum'?

When you plan to set up a child care centre, you will need to think about what you will do with children as they come to you each day throughout the year, what activities you will plan from one day to the next, why you should plan them and how you will plan them. In other words, how you will string together the play activities you have read about into daily and weekly schedules and monthly and yearly plans. These are the aspects that are involved in planning the curriculum. The curriculum will be different for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, as their abilities and needs are different.
Objectives

After reading this Unit, you should be able to

• state the necessity for planning the curriculum
• identify the skills, concepts and values that you want the children to acquire after they have completed their stay at your centre
• select the play activities that will help the children to acquire these skills and concepts
• formulate full-day and half-day schedules for centres for preschoolers, toddlers and infants
• manage a large group of preschool children in the centre
• understand the importance of structure and flexibility in schedules.

30.2 THE NECESSITY FOR PLANNING THE CURRICULUM

Why is it necessary to plan the activities you will organize from one day to the next, throughout the year? Planning the curriculum will give a focus, a direction and a purpose to your activities in the centre. It will help you to be clear as to what abilities and skills you are fostering in children. If daily and weekly scheduling of activities is not done carefully, your programme may put more emphasis on some aspects of development and neglect the others.

Careful planning of daily and weekly activities will also help you to know how the children have grown and what abilities they have acquired, over a certain time period. You will be able to answer questions like, "Have the children gained social skills in this period of time?", "Has their understanding of different types of animals been furthered in this time period?" or "Are they now better able to express themselves?", since while scheduling play activities, you would have kept these aspects in mind.

If you think about your day-to-day experiences, you will agree that planning and scheduling one's work makes it easier to achieve one's goals. For example, when preparing for an examination, you plan your learning strategy. You decide what it is that you want to learn and then you plan how you can learn this—perhaps you decide that each day you will do a certain portion and, by the end of the week, you will know a certain amount. Then, after a week, you assess whether or not you have achieved your target. Depending upon your assessment, you continue with or modify your strategy. If you do not plan in such a manner, it is quite likely that you may not be prepared to sit for the examination. Planning is involved in each area of your life — as you think about the family budget, organize an excursion or prepare to host a dinner. The same principles hold true when planning a programme for a child care centre. When planning a curriculum you should think about the following aspects:

1) What is it that you want the children to learn and acquire during the period they are with you? The children may be with you for a year or more. You must be clear as to how you want them to develop. In other words, you must state the long term goals of your programme.

2) How will you help children achieve the long term goals? To do so, you will have to break up your long term goals into short term goals, i.e. goals for a shorter time period, say a week or a month or two. Then based on these, you will select the play activities for each day.

3) How will you know whether the short term and long term goals have been achieved? This involves evaluating children’s progress and the play activities.

Based on this discussion you have perhaps identified the five stages in planning a curriculum. These are:

a) stating the long term goals
b) breaking down each long term goal into short term goals
c) identifying the play activities related to the short term goals
Let us read about each of these aspects in detail.

30.3 LONG TERM GOALS

Long term goals are the skills, abilities, concepts and values that you expect the children to acquire after they have completed their stay at your centre, which may be for a period ranging from months to years. They are broad and general statements about how you think you will guide children’s development while they attend your centre. The long term goals will provide a direction to your planning, activity selection and interaction with children.

But how does one identify the long term goals? There is a simple method of doing so. Think of what you want the children to be and what you want them to know. These are the long term goals. The basic purpose of a child care centre — whether it is a creche or a preschool centre, is to foster the all round development of children. The programme should be such that children develop positive feelings about themselves. Our focus is the development of the whole child and, therefore, our long term goal should be fostering optimal development in the physical, motor, emotional, social, cognitive and language domains. When these goals are based upon the needs of children, their abilities and interests, then the programme will be child centered and appropriate to their developmental level.

As must be clear to you, the long term goals will depend upon the ages of the children who will come to your centre. In the following sub-sections we have stated the long term goals with respect to infants, toddlers and preschoolers, in each area of development.

30.3.1 Physical and Motor Goals

A programme that fosters physical and motor development of infants should allow opportunities for

a) developing physical strength
b) developing the five senses
c) developing eye-hand coordination
d) developing muscular coordination and balance
e) practising gross motor skills of crawling, standing and walking
f) practising fine motor skills of reaching out and grasping

A programme for toddlers should allow opportunities for

a) acquiring physical strength
b) refining eye-hand coordination
c) using the gross motor abilities of walking, running and jumping
d) practising fine motor abilities of grasping and scribbling
e) developing body balance and coordination

For the preschooler the programme should allow opportunities for

a) developing body balance and coordination
b) physical growth and development
c) gaining muscular control and developing fine and gross motor skills such as running, hopping, catching, throwing, jumping, drawing, painting, scribbling and writing
d) developing an awareness of the body and its relationship in space
e) establishing desirable feelings towards one’s body and its functions
f) establishing desirable health, hygiene and feeding habits

These are some long term goals one can set to foster physical and motor abilities. Can you think of any other goals that can be added to the lists?
If you look at these goals carefully, you will find that these goals have been derived from the milestones of physical and motor development that we have discussed in Blocks 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Before you read further, you might like to write down what you think can be the long term goals in the other areas of development, based upon your reading of the earlier Blocks. Subsequently, you can match your goals with the ones we have listed.

30.3.2 Cognitive Goals
Some of the long term cognitive goals for infants can be
a) fostering the skills of discrimination and generalization
b) helping them to know the link between their actions and those of others
c) helping them to understand that they can have an impact on things
d) providing opportunities for goal-directed behaviour
e) enabling them to learn about objects and things

When working with toddlers you should
a) encourage them to try out and experiment
b) give them opportunities to explore on their own and find solutions to simple problems
c) help them to know that by varying their actions they can have different effects on objects
d) encourage them to try out different methods of solving a problem and adopt the one that is most suitable
e) allow opportunities for make-believe play
f) help them to understand simple cause and effect relationships
g) help them to gain information about things around them

A programme for preschoolers should
a) help them develop a positive attitude towards learning
b) enable them to discover the world around them on their own and solve problems
c) sharpen their sensory awareness by building upon their vision, hearing, touch, taste and smell
d) foster a scientific attitude by helping them to make observations and arrive at conclusions
e) foster their ability to make decisions
f) give opportunities to use the mental abilities of matching, perceiving common relations, grouping, conservation, seriation and temporal ordering in day-to-day situations
g) help them to develop concepts
h) enhance their reasoning skills and enable them to determine simple cause-and-effect relationships
i) give them opportunities to be creative
j) develop their attention span and memory
k) help them to follow directions and instructions

30.3.3 Language Goals
Have you included the following goals in your list? By the end of the first year, infants should be able to
a) understand references to common objects
b) point at common objects on hearing the labels
c) comprehend simple sentences
d) babble and say a word or two
For toddlers and preschoolers the following can be the long term goals:

a) providing opportunities for interaction with adults and peers so as to help children develop language skills
b) helping children increase their vocabulary
c) helping them to put their ideas into words and sentences and to express themselves clearly
d) fostering pre-writing and pre-reading skills
e) fostering conversational skills

30.3.4 Social Goals

Are the goals for infants, that you have listed, along the following lines? Your programme should help infants to

a) develop attachment with the caregivers that will lay the foundation for a trusting attitude
b) respond to others and initiate 'dialogues'.

When working with toddlers you must

a) encourage them to do some things on their own and develop some independence
b) foster in them feelings of empathy and encourage them to show helpful behaviour
c) give them opportunities to know what they can do

Through the following long term goals you can help preschoolers to develop social relationships and enable them to be socially well-adjusted. Your programme should help preschoolers to:

a) build a positive relationship with their family, peers and other adults
b) learn to cooperate, show empathy and helpful behaviour
c) learn to respect the rights of others
d) develop a sense of self-worth and a positive self-esteem which will lead to a good concept of the self
e) learn to control undesirable behaviour and acquire socially acceptable ways of behaviour
f) learn to function as members of a group
g) assume responsibility and develop independence and initiative
h) understand that people are different and accept them
i) develop desirable social values
j) develop leadership skills
k) learn to work by oneself
l) listen to conversation and instructions

30.3.5 Emotional Goals

The emotional goals are global as compared to the other goals. Therefore, instead of stating them separately for each age group, we have put them together.

Generally speaking, the following long term goals will help children become emotionally sound. Through the activities in your centre, you should help the children to

a) understand their emotions and to express these in constructive and socially acceptable ways
b) understand others and feel empathy for them
c) persist in their efforts until a task is completed
d) accept and adjust to opposition and failure
e) develop confidence in themselves and in others, i.e., develop an attitude of trust
f) learn to value themselves, i.e., build a positive self-concept
g) become self-reliant
As you read these long term goals, it must have become clear to you that listing these goals helps you to describe the purpose of your programme. However, these goals provide only general guidelines. They may not help you specifically in your daily interactions with children. They say nothing about the specific activities you can carry out with them from day to day. Therefore, they must be reduced to smaller and more specific short term goals.

30.4 SHORT TERM GOALS

Short term goals, as the name suggests, are those that can be achieved in a short time period, say a few weeks or a month or two, and sometimes even a day. Thus you may have daily, weekly or monthly short term goals. Short term goals emerge from the immediate needs and interests of children.

Let us take up some of the long term goals we have listed earlier and see how they can be broken down into short term goals.

Let us consider the long term goal of “Helping preschoolers learn about their environment”. This means that by the time the children are ready to leave the preschool, they should know about some aspects of their environment. It will be easier for you to achieve this goal if you state what it is that you want the children to learn in a month or two, and then devise play activities around it. In other words, you will have to state your short term goals. Through such short term goals, set for every two months, you will be able to achieve your long term goal. Thus, one of your short term goals may be, for example, “Carrying out play activities to help children understand how plants grow and helping them know about five different kinds of animals between the period of January and February (two months).” For the next two months, you can have another short term goal. This may be: “In this period of 2 months, I will carry out play activities to help children understand the concepts of floating and sinking, heavy and light. Along with this, I will carry out activities related to people living in different climates, their different lifestyles, eating habits and clothes through examples about people living in the hilly areas and in the desert”. These, in fact, were the short term goals stated by an educator working in a preschool. Through similar short-term goals you can plan the environment-related concepts that you will introduce to children.

The long term goal of “Helping children develop conversational skills” can be achieved through the following short term goals:

- giving children opportunities to talk to each other
- involving children in a discussion on a regular basis
- asking children questions related to the activity they are doing
- helping them know that they must listen attentively to others

In contrast to the short term goals that we stated in the preceding example, these short term goals are not just for a month or two. Rather they must be met each day, during the entire stay of children at the centre. It would be futile if you were to focus on these goals for a month or two and then forget about them. Children may not be able to develop conversational skills in a couple of months. Rather, each day children must get opportunities to talk, to discuss, to question and to answer. Let us take a few more examples to understand how long term goals can be broken down into short term goals.

The long term goal of “Helping toddlers expand their vocabulary” can be achieved by stating monthly short term goals such as: “In this month (April) I will introduce to children four new words, explain their meaning and help them use these words during conversation”; “In this month (May), I will encourage the usage of the new words learnt in April as well as introduce four more words”, and so on.

The long term goal of “Helping preschoolers become independent” can be achieved through the following daily goals:

- “After children complete a play activity, I will ask them to help me put the play material back in the original place and clean up the area”.
- “Each child will distribute lunch at mealtimes by rotation.”
- “Children will clean up the play room, under my supervision.”
Can you think of some other ways in which you can foster independence in children in
day-to-day activities?

Table 30.1 gives some more examples of how long term goals can be stated in terms of
short term goals. As you will be able to make out, some of these short term goals will be
met daily while some will be spread over days and weeks.

Table: 30.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long Term Goals</th>
<th>Short Term Goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Helping toddlers develop muscular control for fine and gross motor tasks</td>
<td>a) To help children practise walking.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b) To develop eye-hand coordination by giving children opportunities to hold and grasp objects and scribble.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) To give children practice in throwing and catching.</td>
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<td>2) Developing preschoolers' cognitive abilities</td>
<td>a) To foster the ability to match and understand common relations.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) To provide opportunities to reason, analyse and deduce the answers to problem situations.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) To strengthen children's understanding of grouping and seriation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) Developing self-confidence and self-worth</td>
<td>a) To help children discover that they are capable of doing many things.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b) To convey to children that they are competent.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c) To help them out when they face difficulty in doing a particular task.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4) To help the infant to know that she can have an effect on things</td>
<td>a) To engage in play activities that require the child to do something with objects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) To talk to the infant about her actions and the results they have.</td>
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</tbody>
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You can see that these short-term goals are more specific than the long-term goals and
give you an idea about the kind of play activities that can be organized with children. Let
us read about choosing play activities in the next Section.
After the short term goals are determined for a day, a week, a fortnight or a month, as the case may be, you have to choose the play activities to accomplish these goals. You have read about different play activities in the earlier Blocks. Let us take a few examples to understand how to choose play activities to achieve particular short term goals.

To achieve the short-term goal of "Helping toddlers develop eye-hand coordination", you can plan play activities like
- scribbling
- painting
- finger painting
- arranging jigsaw puzzles
- threading leaves/beads

Do you remember reading about these activities in the earlier Blocks?

To help children understand the concept of colour, you can devise the following play activities:
- matching colour cards
- identifying objects of a particular colour
- labelling colours
- identifying the colours of flowers during a walk
- identifying the colours of the animals encountered during the walk
- forming children into groups based on the colour of their clothes

In the space provided, list the play activities that you can carry out for the following short term goals:

1) help the infant walk

2) develop toddlers' vocabulary

3) help preschoolers' develop the concept of number
To develop the spirit of cooperation and sharing you can:

- organize group activities like painting, making a collage or making objects from clay
- organize team games during outdoor play
- narrate a story or sing a rhyme around this theme
- draw children's attention towards the feelings of others
- show cooperative and helpful behaviour yourself
- praise children when they cooperate with others and share their things

What play activities can you organize to enhance children's self-esteem and feelings of self-worth? Are there any particular activities you can plan? If you think about it carefully, you will find that you can help children develop positive feelings about themselves through most play activities. You know that children develop self-esteem when they are able to accomplish things and when they meet with success in their tasks. Thus, if you plan appropriate activities, children will find them interesting and challenging. When their efforts are successful, they will feel good about themselves and form a positive opinion about their abilities. Your interactions with children, your comments to them and words of praise and guidance will further strengthen these feelings.

Similarly, there is no single play activity that will help children find ways of expressing their emotions. Rather, this ability will develop as you guide them along from day-to-day. In fact, this is true for most of the goals of social and emotional development. These goals will be fostered through your day-to-day communication with them and by setting an example of your own behaviour, rather than through a few specific activities.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Answer the following questions briefly in the space provided below.

1) What is the need for planning the curriculum of a child care centre?

2) What do you understand by the term 'long-term goals' in the context of a child care centre?

3) You have read in the text that one of the long term goals when working with infants is "Providing opportunities for goal-directed behaviour". If you were operating a creche for infants, how would you break down this goal into short term goals and what play activities would you plan?
It would be helpful for you to break down each long term goal that we have listed in the Unit into short term goals and identify the corresponding play activities. In this way you will have a list ready, to which you can refer when you are organizing your own child care centre. You can compare your list with those prepared by other learners when you meet them at the Study Centre.

### 30.6 FORMULATING DAILY SCHEDULES

It must be evident to you that within a particular week or a month, the play activities you organize must correspond to the short term goals you have set. After identifying the play activities corresponding to your short term goals, what remains to be done is to string together these activities into a daily schedule, i.e., to decide what activities you will carry out one day, the next day and so on. As we have said earlier, the major factor that will influence how you formulate the day’s schedule is the age of the children. We will talk about scheduling activities for infants under Section 30.9. Let us now read about the factors that one must keep in mind while formulating daily schedules for toddlers and preschoolers. You have read something about this aspect in the earlier Blocks, particularly in Unit 5 and Unit 22. Can you recall some points and list them? Compare your points with those listed below.

1) Since the aim of your programme is to foster the development of children in all areas—cognitive, language, physical, motor, and socio-emotional, this must be reflected in your daily schedule. To foster all round development, you must see that over a period of a week, some activities have been planned for each area of development. If this is done, your programme will be comprehensive and balanced and you will be able to guard against neglecting any area of development.

If you look at the above discussion in another way, it means that each activity you include in the day’s plan should have an objective and a purpose. To help yourself in doing this, you can make a chart that mentions the play activities for a week and the aspect of development each activity fosters. Such a chart pinpoints the reason for including each activity, and helps you to ensure that something has been planned for each area of development over the week. It also makes it easier to explain to parents why play activities are included in the daily plan. We have given an example of such a ‘Checking Chart’ in sub-section 30.7.1.

You know that while a particular activity fosters development in mainly one specific area, it also contributes to development in other areas. For example, outdoor team games mainly enhance physical and motor development. However, as children play together they also learn to cooperate and take turns (social development) and the games also give them an opportunity to express emotions.

Similarly, when children engage in dramatic play, they get an opportunity to express their emotions; while enacting their roles they develop language skills, as they participate in a group they learn to cooperate; it is also possible that during their play they acquire some new concepts. Thus, through one activity, development in several areas is fostered.

Since most play activities contribute to more than one area of development, it makes it easier for you to plan the day’s schedule. With a few activities, you can promote development in most of the areas.
2) During the day you must have activities that allow vigorous physical activity. Children are energetic. Sitting in one place for long tires them out and they lose interest in what is going on. Keeping this in mind, plan play activities involving running, jumping, climbing, catching and throwing. These are favourites with most children. However, these can leave the children exhausted as well. Therefore, these experiences of strenuous physical activity must be interspersed with quiet and restful play activities so that children regain their energy. Thus, after outdoor games you can organize a discussion around some concept, narrate a story or set up a drawing session. The outdoor vigorous play can also be followed by snack time or sleeping time.

3) During the day there should be some indoor and some outdoor play activities. This way you will be able to provide a mix of large and small muscle activities. This aspect is closely related to the one about vigorous physical activities and quieter ones. Outdoor play is generally vigorous and indoor activities are usually quieter.

You can also plan the day’s schedule in such a way that when one group is playing outside, another group is indoors. Such an arrangement is helpful when your indoor or outdoor space is not adequate to accommodate all the children at the same time or when you have limited play equipment.

Of course, outdoor play is possible only when there is such space. When it is not available, it would be helpful to plan a weekly trip to the neighbourhood park or the community playground, so that the children can play outdoor games.

It is also possible that you have no indoor space at all, as in the Ruchika programme you have read about in Unit 29. In this case, you have to organize your entire programme outdoors. You will read more about organizing space in Unit 31.

4) There must be a balance between structured activities initiated by you and free play initiated by the children. Do you remember reading about this aspect in Unit 5? Some free play activities are playing with blocks, playing with sand and water, outdoor games, playing with dolls and puppets, painting and working with clay. During free play children are free to choose their play material and games. Structured activities are those where children participate in what the educator has planned. For example, taking the children out on a trip or organizing activities around a particular theme are structured activities.

Remember that even during free play activities, you have to keep an eye on children to prevent accidents or fights. Another point to remember is that the distinction between free play and structured play is usually a matter of the extent to which the educator gets involved in and gives directions regarding how to go about the activity. So activities like painting and working with clay which have been listed above as free play activities will be free play if children have the freedom to paint as they wish and make what they wish. They become structured if the educator gives directions regarding the activity such as painting related to specific themes.

5) During the day you must organize both group and individual activities. The group activities will foster a spirit of cooperation and social skills, while the individual activities will give the child a chance to be alone and do something on her own. Alternating group activities with individual activities will help to guard against monotony.

6) Over the week carry out some activities that the children are familiar with and some that are new for them. Children like to repeat the activities they are familiar with. You may have seen children play with the same toys and manipulate the same puzzles for days together. Being able to do a thing well gives them a sense of mastery.

However, unless you include some new activities as well, children will get bored and begin to lose interest. Introduce a new song, a new outdoor game or a new story each day. Sometimes changing the method of doing something can also make an activity different. For example, drawing on the floor instead of on paper, or painting using the finger instead of the brush, can add to the fun.

7) The schedule of activities should be at a reasonable pace throughout the day. This means that you should allow enough time to children to complete each activity.
Remember, you have to introduce the activity, explain it, give children time to do it and wind it up. All this takes time, so allow for it in the time table. Your time table should be such that it permits children to become truly engrossed in what they are doing. A time period of 20 to 25 minutes is usually appropriate for most activities. However, the specific duration that would need to be allowed for each activity would of course vary from one activity to another.

If you set up shorter time periods than required, children will feel rushed. They will have to change from one activity to another, without being able to concentrate on any one activity. This is likely to make them feel frustrated. Also, children cannot hurry, and do not enjoy being hurried. This is particularly true in the case of toddlers and younger preschoolers.

When there is a reasonable pace, it also means that you have more time to interact with children and can build a relationship with each child.

With these points in mind, let us now formulate daily and weekly schedules. As we have said earlier, the schedules of activities will be different for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. The schedule will also vary depending upon whether you have the children with you for the whole day or half-a-day. In the following sub-sections we will talk about the full-day and half-day schedules with reference to each age group.

The schedules that are suggested in the following sub-sections are examples. They provide guidelines about how the day can be organized. When you work in a child care centre, you may have to design your own schedules which will be relevant for your situation.

Another aspect that you must remember is that the schedules serve as a plan of action. Do not adhere rigidly to them. You should be flexible and open to suggestions from children as regards the activities to be carried out during the day. We will come back to this point later in the Unit.

Let us first formulate full-day and half-day schedules for each age group.

### 30.7 SCHEDULES FOR PRESCHOOLERS

The schedule will depend upon the number of hours the children are at the centre. Most preschools operate for half-a-day—usually for 3-4 hours in the morning. It is also possible that some children stay on till the evening, since their parents are working. In these cases you will have to devise activities for these children for the entire day. How can you organize your activities in these time periods? Can you think of some ways?

One of the ways you can structure the day is to identify the activities that are generally carried out at a specific time each day. Fix these activities in the daily schedule and then fit in the other play activities. Children like a routine. Carrying out the same activities at a certain fixed period gives them a sense of security. Can you think of some routine activities in the centre? The arrival and departure of children are routine. The first 15-20 minutes of the day will be taken up in greeting the children and the last 15-20 minutes in preparing them for departure. Whether it is a half-day or a full-day centre, children will have the mid-morning snack. Around this time they may also want to go to the toilet and you will have to give them a wash. You can schedule the snack time from 11 a.m.-11.30 a.m. In a full-day centre, children will have lunch and a nap as well. Thus the time between 1.00 p.m. and 3.30 p.m. will be taken up for having lunch and resting. These then are the constant features from day-to-day. Thus in a half-day centre, you have about two hours before the snack time and one to one-and-a-half hours after it, to organize the play activities. In the full-day centre you have an additional one-and-a-half to two hours in the afternoon.
Let us read about each of these above mentioned routine activities in detail.

**Arrival of Children** : As the children come, greet them and give them time to settle down. Whatever be the age group of children, greeting them, hugging them and making them feel comfortable are the first things you must do, as they come to the centre. Spend a few minutes with a child who wants to talk about something to you. Help the child to adjust, as her parents leave her at the centre. These few minutes set the tone for the day. This is also the time when children will talk to each other or begin to play spontaneously with play materials. The first 15-20 minutes of the morning would be spent thus.

When all the children have arrived, you can organize an assembly for 10 to 15 minutes. The children may sing a few rhymes or do simple exercises. During the assembly, you can discuss the activities you have planned for the day. If you have decided upon certain specific activities, this is the time to tell them briefly, such as— “Today we will play some games with water and later go out for a walk.” If you have left the choice to the children in case of other activities, they could be asked now— “Would you like to paint or make toys with clay?” You may get a mixed reaction— some may want to paint and others may like to work with clay.

Accordingly, you must set up these activities.

**Snack Time** : Either the children will be getting the snacks from home or you will be preparing them in the centre. If you prepare the snack, you must see to it that the snack is nutritious and wholesome. Do you remember reading about these aspects in Unit 12 and Unit 17?

This is a time when children are together. You can use this opportunity to talk to them about things like washing their hands before eating. You can involve the children in a prayer or a song prior to eating. Preschoolers like to lay out the plates and the glasses and serve the food. As you ask the children, “Have you laid a plate for each child?”, you will be fostering number concept and one-to-one correspondence. Involve the children in cleaning up after they have finished eating. This will encourage independence. Through these tasks, children will also learn the value of sharing and cooperation.

**Going Home** : About 15 to 20 minutes before the time for departure, you must begin to prepare the children for going home. Ask them to wind up the activity they are doing. They may need to wash their hands and put things away, which will take time. As each child puts the things away, you can talk to her about her experiences during the day. You may have a van or a bus or a rickshaw to drop the children home. Some parents may be coming to take the children home themselves.

After allotting time for the routine activities, the rest of the time can be used for scheduling play activities. Let us read how the play activities can be incorporated in the daily schedule.

**Play Activities** : Before the snack time you have about 90 minutes to carry out play activities. Each activity, from the time when it is begun to the time it is wound up will, on an average, take 25-30 minutes. Therefore, in the morning session you can carry out two or, at the most, three different activities with children.

During the period after snack time, you have about 75 minutes. You can accommodate two play activities in this period. In the full-day centre you have another 90 minutes after the children have had their nap.

Within these time slots there are many ways in which you can schedule and organize the play activities. One of the ways is to take up a theme and build all the play activities that day around it. Through this theme, you can impart concepts, foster children’s language skills and enhance social skills. Let us study an example of it.

Supposing you have introduced the theme of ‘Seasons’. You can involve the children in a discussion about the different seasons, the weather and the clothing worn in each season. An activity along these lines has been described in Unit 22. This discussion may take about 20-25 minutes. Your next activity can be painting, drawing or making a collage around this theme. Painting and drawing may be a group or an individual activity. A third activity can be narrating a story or involving children in rhymes and songs around this theme. A fourth activity can be going for a walk in the neighbourhood to identify the
flowers that grow in that season. Can you think of other activities? These four activities described above, spread over the entire day foster development in all the areas. Can you say how this happens? Write your comments in the margin and check with the discussion that follows.

The discussion will develop children’s reasoning skills, strengthen their understanding of cause and effect and help them to acquire new concepts. Painting, drawing and singing rhymes provide emotional satisfaction and working in a group gives the children a feeling of togetherness. During the walk, they will learn more about the environment and as they talk about their experience, their language skills will develop. You can also impart number and colour concepts as children count the types of flowers and the number of colours. You can also carry out classification activities as you ask children to put flowers of a certain colour or shape together. This approach of structuring activities around a particular theme works well with preschoolers.

By scheduling activities in the above manner, you can also maintain a balance between group and individual activities and between outdoor and indoor play.

There is another approach you can adopt as regards scheduling play activities. Instead of carrying out all the play activities related to a particular theme in one day, you can devote some time each day to that theme and thus spread the activities across the week or a fortnight, depending upon the number of activities. For example, you can spend about half an hour on activities related to seasons and weather each day and during the remaining period, you can schedule other activities. Thus ‘Seasons’ becomes the project for the week or fortnight. Similarly, you can designate a week as the ‘Colour Week’ or ‘Animal Week’. When you follow this approach, you carry out some activities during the day which are organized around a particular theme and at the same time, allow for some other play activities during the day. For example, you may begin the morning with outdoor free play. Then you can organize the structured activity related to the project of the week. By this time it will be snack time. After the snacks you may organize indoor free play. By noon, if it is a half-day centre, you will be preparing the children for going home. If it is a full-day centre, the indoor free play will be followed by meals.

Some educators prefer to carry out structured learning activities in the morning, before the children are exhausted by outdoor play. You can try out the different routines and see what suits your group of children and weather conditions the best.

You have just read that children like a routine. Try to keep a routine in your play activities as well. If you have planned to organize outdoor games immediately after assembly followed by activities related to the project, other structured activities and then indoor free play, continue with this routine each day. In this way, children will know what to expect and what to do at different times during the day. Children need to feel secure and establishing routines helps in this.

While scheduling the play activities, you must follow the principles that you have read in Section 30.6. Besides these, there is another aspect that you must keep in mind and that is—there must be continuity in terms of the skills and concepts that you are fostering, from one day to the next. For example, if you have introduced the concept of number on a certain day, follow it up with activities related to it on the subsequent days. This is also related to the fact that when children are learning a new concept, it must be presented to them repeatedly over a period of time, since this will help them to learn it well. If you were to strengthen children’s concept of number, what activities would you organize each day? Check your list with the one given below.

Some of these may be:

- involve children in counting the number of girls and boys each day.
- ask them to find out if each child was to get one pencil, are there enough for all. You can do the same with notebooks and glasses.
- matching number cards. You have read about this activity in Unit 23.
- ask them to make a cluster of 2, 3, 4… objects, depending upon the numbers they know.
- ask them to arrange pebbles on the numbers written on the floor.

In this way you can strengthen the concept of number through different activities each day. The variety in activities will prevent monotony.
30.7.1 Half-day Schedule

Keeping the above discussion in mind, let us examine a half-day schedule prepared by a preschool worker. The schedule of week's activities is described in Table 30.2.

### Table 30.2: Schedule of a Week's Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 am to 9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Children arrive; greet them; talk to each child; organize an assembly;</td>
<td>Outdoor free play</td>
<td>Outdoor free play</td>
<td>Structured activities related to the project:</td>
<td>Outdoor play—simple team games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rhymes; talking to children about what has been planned for them and asking them what they want to do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a) Taking care of potted plant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Outdoor free play</td>
<td>Outdoor free play</td>
<td>Outdoor free play</td>
<td>b) Walk in the neighbourhood focussing on different types of flowers and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>plants growing in the area; playing for some time in the park.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Structured activities related to the project:— ‘Growing plants’:—</td>
<td>Structured activities related to the project:—</td>
<td>Structured activities related to the project:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) Discussion on how to grow a plant.</td>
<td>a) Taking care of potted plant.</td>
<td>a) Taking care of potted plant.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Planting seeds in pots—one pot for a group of five children.</td>
<td>b) Discussion to lead to fruits &amp; vegetables-colour &amp; name identification</td>
<td>b) Making a fruit salad and eating it at snack time; during preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>using real vegetables &amp; fruits;</td>
<td>discussion on colour, names taste and sequence of preparation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grouping activities with these.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 a.m. to 12 noon</td>
<td>Story telling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 noon to 12:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Indoor free play—Children will choose from various activities and move freely from one group to the other. This will continue till time of departure.</td>
<td>Indoor free play—Children will choose from various activities and move freely from one group to the other. This will continue till time of departure.</td>
<td>Indoor free play—Children will choose from various activities and move freely from one group to the other. This will continue till time of departure.</td>
<td>Indoors free play—Children will choose from various activities and move freely from one group to the other. This will continue till time of departure.</td>
<td>Indoors free play—Children will choose from various activities and move freely from one group to the other. This will continue till time of departure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 p.m. to 12:45 p.m.</td>
<td>D E P A R T U R E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You have read about the aspects to be kept in mind while devising schedules. Does this schedule take care of all those aspects? List your points and check them with the ones that follow.
The first thing that one must check is whether or not there are some activities related to each area of development within the week. To do so you can use the 'Checking Chart'. Fill in the activities related to each area of development in the chart. As you use this chart, you will also be clear as to the purpose of each activity. Let us see whether the schedule described above fulfils this requirement or not, by using the checking chart described in Table 30.3.

### Table 30.3: Checking Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Development</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical and Motor</td>
<td>Outdoor &amp; Indoor free play</td>
<td>Outdoor &amp; Indoor free play</td>
<td>Outdoor &amp; Indoor free play</td>
<td>Walk; Outdoor play in park</td>
<td>Outdoor play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-emotional</td>
<td>Story telling; Indoor &amp; Outdoor free play</td>
<td>Indoor &amp; Outdoor play</td>
<td>Making fruit salad; Outdoor &amp; Indoor play</td>
<td>Outdoor play; Painting</td>
<td>Outdoor play; Collage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Discussion; Story telling</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Discussion; Walk</td>
<td>Rhymes; Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Potting the plant</td>
<td>Care of potted plant; Discussion on fruits and vegetables</td>
<td>Care of potted plant; Making fruit salad; Discussion</td>
<td>Walk; Discussion</td>
<td>Collage; Preparing sound boxes &amp; related activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you can see, the week's schedule is balanced. Some activities related to each area of development are spread throughout the week.

You may have also noticed that there is a continuity in concepts from one day to the next. On Monday, the educator began with a structured activity related to growing plants and she continued this theme everyday of the week. Through this discussion emerged the idea of making a fruit salad in the class. The walk helped the children to perceive a link between the world around them and the discussions in the class. Thus, children's understanding was reinforced through different activities. Similarly, activities on classification and identification are interspersed during the week.

The educator has also maintained a routine throughout the week. Certain activities are carried out at specific times.

You will notice that the educator has provided for quiet and relaxed activities after vigorous ones. There is a mix of structured and free play activities as well. The time scheduling is such that sufficient time has been allotted for children to complete an activity to their satisfaction.

By the end of the week, based upon her assessment of children, the educator can decide whether she should introduce some new concepts the following week.

The half-day schedule described in Table 30.2 is only a guideline. You must evolve your own schedules, based upon the specific needs and abilities of children who come to your centre. At this point, it will be helpful for you to refer to Question 2 of Check Your Progress Exercise 2. This will give you practice in formulating a week's schedule.

### 30.7.2 Full-day Schedule

Let us now read about formulating a full-day schedule for the preschool centre. There is one advantage in a full-day centre — the longer time with children gives you an opportunity to pace your day well, to involve children in more activities and to form a close relationship with them.

However, you must guard against lack of variety and monotony in the day-to-day activities, which may result when the educators are fatigued. It happens that teachers, tired after half-a-day, are not interested in thinking of creative play activities for children. Rather than letting this happen, you must attempt to solve the problem of fatigue of the staff. You must have adequate number of teachers and space their activities, so that while one is
actively involved in activities in the morning, the other does so in the afternoon. If you have the resources, you can also think in terms of two shifts for the staff—one in the morning and one in the afternoon. If you are managing the children alone, structured activities alternated with free play activities will help. While children are playing by themselves, you can recoup your energy and strength.

The following is an example of a full-day’s schedule:

**Schedule**

9 a.m.-1 p.m. — During this period you can schedule the activities in the same way as you would do in a half-day centre.

1.00-1.45 p.m. — Children wash hands and eat lunch. They help as much as they can in serving the food. This is a time when you can reinforce self-help skills.

1.45-3.00 p.m. — Usually, preschoolers will sleep in the afternoon, but there are individual differences. Some may just want to lie down. Those who do not want to lie down at all, should feel free to select a quiet activity which will not disturb the others.

Most children will be up by three o’clock.

3.00-3.15 p.m. — A light snack.

3.15-4.15 p.m. — Activity time. At this time it is best to let the children choose the play activities they want. They may want to work individually or in groups. If the weather permits, children can play outdoors as well. You can tell a story at this time. If the children are attentive you can carry out a structured learning activity on some days.

4.15-4.30 p.m. — Departure: washing hands, and getting ready. Children walk home, or their parents come for them, or the vehicle of the centre drops them home.

### 30.7.3 Involving Children in Planning

Try to involve the preschoolers, as much as you can, in planning the activities in the centre. When children are also involved in planning, the programme becomes really child-centered. Children gain intellectually because this is an opportunity when they make decisions, solve problems and organize their thoughts. Their ability to relate events, think about the past and anticipate events is enhanced. Participation also gives them the feeling that their opinions are important. They feel more sure of themselves. The programme also becomes lively as it revolves around children’s needs and interests.

How can you involve children in planning? Do you have some ideas?

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Some examples of including children’s ideas are given herewith. You can involve the children in deciding the play activities. When you talk about the different festivals, for example, ask the children what festivals they celebrate at home and what activities can be taken up in the centre in relation to the festivals. In the beginning, you will need to help the children organize their thoughts. But once they know that you listen to what they say and actually carry out their suggestions, they will be forthcoming with their ideas. In one particular centre, children gave suggestions about celebrating Christmas. They made greeting cards, decorated the room and suggested what they would like to eat. Children had so many ideas that the decorations and celebrations for Christmas went on for three days. They also suggested that the teacher become Santa Claus.
Planning the Curriculum

You can also ask for children's opinion about what theme they would like to work on during the week. If many children are interested in a particular topic, you could make that the project of the week.

Children can also suggest the places they would like to visit.

Children can be involved in deciding the arrangements and decoration of the room.
Simple questions like, "Where do you think we can put this?", "Do you think it would be better to put the dolls here or there?", will bring forth a variety of ideas.

There are two aspects to be kept in mind when you get children to plan. Firstly, involving children does not mean following every suggestion. If their suggestions are not appropriate, you must tell them why you think so. Secondly, do not ask children for their opinions and choices if you do not intend to follow them. Children's views must be respected.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Your friend is about to open a centre for older toddlers and preschoolers. She has come for suggestions regarding scheduling activities during the day and formulating a curriculum. What aspects will you tell her to bear in mind while doing so? Answer briefly in the space provided below.

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2) Table 30.4 on the next page lists the schedule of activities for a week prepared by an educator in a preschool centre. She has 20 children in the age group 4-4 1/2 years. In the schedule she has specified some activities while the other time slots have been left blank. Keeping in mind the principles for formulating schedules, can you suggest the activities that would be suitable during these periods? Specify the exact activity that you suggest should be carried out.

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## Table 30.4: Schedule of a Week's Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.00 a.m. to</td>
<td>Children arrive; greet them; assembly; rhymes; talking about the plans for the day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.30 a.m.</td>
<td>Structured activity to impart concept of colour through colour cards. Using colour cards for matching and labelling, identifying similar coloured objects in the room</td>
<td>Walk in the neighbourhood with a view to observe the colour of plants &amp; flowers</td>
<td>Structured activity—puppet show</td>
<td>Structured activity—Diwali to be celebrated in the centre on Monday. Therefore, discussion about the festival</td>
<td>Structured activity— revising colours; play activities to foster number concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.15 a.m. to</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.00 a.m.</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30 a.m.</td>
<td>Outdoor free play</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.15 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.45 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3) What are some of the ways you can involve preschoolers in planning? List them in the space below.


30.8 SCHEDULE FOR OLDER TODDLERS

The principles for planning a day's schedule for toddlers are largely the same as those outlined for preschoolers. However, there are some differences. The first of these is that you will not be able to organize many group activities with toddlers. Narrating stories or making a simple collage are some group activities you can carry out with older toddlers but, by and large, painting, drawing, working with clay, playing with blocks and toys will be individual rather than group activities. Toddlers, for most of the time, play by themselves. You will have to see what each child likes to do and help her learn from that activity. One of the ways you can structure the day's activities is to keep the material for four or five activities ready such as blocks, puzzles, materials for role play, painting and clay and then ask the children what they would like to do. As they finish one activity, they can move to the next one. Some toddlers will have their own plan for the day. The others may have no idea at all about what to do. You will have to help them make a decision. You can say: "You can begin playing with blocks and then decide what you want to do."

With older toddlers you can organize a short assembly in the morning where they sing some rhymes and songs.

Secondly, the nature of activities you will carry out with them will be at a different cognitive and language level. You have read about the activities you can carry out with toddlers in Block 3.

When setting up a centre for toddlers and infants (i.e., children under three years of age), you need to remember that the arrival and departure timings will not be as fixed as they are for a preschool centre. Since the parents are encouraged to spend as much time as they can with their child, they would bring the child to the centre only at such time when they are not able to look after him or her at home. Thus, for example, if one of the parents leaves for work around 10:30 a.m., she will leave the child around this time at the centre, even if the centre opens at 9.00 a.m. Another parent whose work finishes in the afternoon, will take away the child much before 5.00 p.m.

Therefore, you will have children coming to and going from the centre at different times during the day. Encourage such flexibility since it is in the interest of the child to spend as much time as possible with the parents.

30.8.1 Schedule for a Full-day Centre

Let us now formulate a day's schedule for the older toddlers, i.e., children between 2 and 3 years of age.

Schedule

9.00 a.m.-10.30 a.m. — Children arrive at different times. As they arrive, greet each child and talk to her for sometime. Give the children a selection of indoor play activities such as blocks, puzzles, stringing beads, working with clay, and ask them what they would like to do.

10.30 a.m.-10.50 a.m. — Involve children in songs and rhymes. This will be a group activity.

10.50 a.m.-11.30 a.m. — A light snack. You may have to help some toddlers eat the food. Some children may want to rest on cots or mats on the floor. Others can play by themselves.
Organizing a Child Care Centre

11.30 a.m.-12.30 p.m. — Outdoor free play followed by washing and cleaning up.

12.30 p.m.-1.00 p.m. — Story telling. Each day during this period you can carry out different structured play activities through which you can impart concepts and enhance language skills.

1.00 p.m.-3.00 p.m. — Lunch followed by nap. Most of the children will get up by 3.15 p.m.

3.15 p.m.-3.45 p.m. — A snack

3.45 p.m.-4.30 p.m. — Indoor free play

4.30 p.m.-5.00 p.m. — Washing up and getting ready for departure. Children leave as their parents come to pick them up. Alternatively, you may have an arrangement to drop them home.

Keeping in mind the fact children need a routine from day-to-day, as well as new activities, you can modify this schedule. Schedule the indoor and outdoor play at the same time each day, but within these time periods, different activities can be organized. During the outdoor play you can take the children out for a walk. Back in the centre discuss the things seen and collected during the walk.

In the schedule we have stated that the time period of 12.30 p.m.-1.00 p.m. can be used to carry out structured activities to enhance cognitive and language skills. If you were an educator working with toddlers, what activities would you carry out? Briefly describe in the space below. You have read about some of these activities in Block 3.

30.9 SCHEDULE FOR INFANTS AND YOUNGER TODDLERS

The schedule for infants and younger toddlers is likely to vary from one child to the other as their activity levels vary, which will cause a difference in their eating and sleeping patterns. Much of the day’s routine will be guided by each child’s sleep and waking patterns. Feeding and sleeping should be on demand. Infants and toddlers need frequent feeding and resting periods during the day. What you must do is to have a set of activities and play material ready, which you can give to them when they are alert and active. You must remember that one caregiver can only attend to two or three infants at a time. Apart from play activities, feeding and diapering infants individually takes time.

Remember that children will come in and go at different times during the day, as discussed in the earlier Section.

The following is a sample of a day's activities in a creche. Using this as a guideline you can plan from week to week, carrying out different types of play activities each day.

Schedule of a Day’s Activities

9.00 a.m.-10.30 a.m. — Arrival, feeding and diapering, caring for infants individually. Give infants toys like rattles and balls to play with, depending upon their interest; conversation with infants. If the infants are older, around 10-11 months of age, involve two or three of them in a game for a short time.

10.30 a.m.-11.00 a.m. — Milk for infants on demand; mothers may come in to breast- feed or give them bottle milk. Toileting and diapering.
11.00 a.m.-12.00 o’clock — Some of the infants will sleep. Carry on a conversation or a play activity with those who do not sleep.

12.00-1.00 p.m. — Infants play with toys on their own; can carry out some activities related to development of senses/motor skills.

1.00 p.m.-1.30 p.m. — Milk/supplementary feeding.

1.30 p.m.-3.00 p.m. — Caring for infants, toileting and diapering. Sleep time.

3.00 p.m.-3.15 p.m. — Infants begin to wake; feeding on demand.

3.15 p.m.-4.15 p.m. — Infants play with toys; conversation with infants; can take them outside for some time.

4.15 p.m.-4.30 p.m. — Washing, diapering and getting ready for departure.

### 30.10 FLEXIBILITY AND STRUCTURE IN THE DAILY SCHEDULE

Till now we have stressed the necessity of formulating schedules so that there is a structure to the programme. While a structure and scheduling is important, it can become a burden if the educator becomes rigid and inflexible about the schedule and ignores the immediate situation. A teacher who insists upon adhering to the schedule minute by minute can create problems both for herself and the children. Such rigidity prevents her from exercising good judgement. The schedules are only a framework. They must be designed with flexibility in mind, being open to adaptation and change. Let us see what is meant by flexibility within a schedule.

It is possible that you had planned an activity for a certain duration but as you carry out the activity, children become so engrossed in it that they want to continue beyond the time you have kept for it. At this point you need to be flexible. Do not worry that this will leave you little or no time for the next activity. That can be carried out another day. Letting children finish the ongoing activity to their satisfaction is quite important.

Sometimes you may have to change the planned activity when you see that the children are not finding it interesting or that it is too simple or too complex. Sometimes children may suggest an activity, in which case you will have to postpone what you had planned, for a later date. Do you remember reading in Unit 22 how the educator changed her activity when one child brought a bird’s nest to the room?

Sometimes the entire day’s planning may have to be changed as happened in the following case. It had been raining intermittently for the past six days in village Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh. The children in a preschool centre in that village were confined indoors on all of these days. Finally the sun broke through and that day the children just did not want to remain indoors. They wanted to play outside. The educator accommodated her plan to children’s desire and organized some learning activities that could be carried on outdoors.

In case of another preschool centre, it started to rain on the very day on which the educator had planned a trip to the zoo. The educator’s plans were completely disrupted. Being resourceful, she thought of some interesting games which kept the children involved on a day when they could not go outside. Such a situation may well happen to you. In such a case, a positive attitude will help. Help children enjoy the day. Involve them in poems, stories, rhymes and pictures related to the weather, and especially to the rain. You could place a bucket in the open and, at intervals, children could check how much water has collected in it. Getting the children to paint or draw could be fun.

One way to manage is to keep a plan ready for emergencies. Planning for the unexpected may seem paradoxical. But the point is that you know these events will happen—there will be a rainy day when the schedule will be upset; it is quite likely that children will bring in insects or plants common to the area and will want to talk about these. If you have a plan ready about what to do when such situations occur, you will be better prepared to meet them.

Planning the Curriculum
One particular teacher had prepared ‘Concept Boxes’ for this purpose. Each box contained play materials, rhymes, stories and list of activities based on a particular concept. She had boxes on rain, snowfall, mountains, insects, plants, sharing, helping, clothing, festivals, vehicles and so on. As and when she found children interested in a particular topic, she would develop their interest by building upon the activities she had listed.

Besides being flexible with the plan of the day, you must also be flexible in your approach towards children. You have read about this aspect in the earlier Blocks. It is possible that during the time for outdoor play, one child prefers to play indoors with dolls, or when everyone is involved in painting, one or two children may want to play in the sand. You must allow this. There is no point in forcing children to do something—they do not learn much in that case. Allow for each child’s moods and desires, so long as they do not clash with the interests of the group.

30.11 MANAGING A LARGE GROUP OF CHILDREN

We have not yet spoken about the child-worker ratio in the centre, i.e., how many children are there in the charge of one worker. When working with preschoolers, one worker can look after 15 to 20 children. This is a feasible ratio and permits the worker to know each child’s interests and to design suitable activities. She will be able to give some personal attention to each child in the group. With toddlers, the worker-child ratio of 1:8 is appropriate and with infants 1:4. But it may happen that you have to look after a much larger group of children. This can happen in preschool centres. In some anganwadis, the worker looks after as many as 30-35 children at a time, with one helper to assist her. In such a situation what should she do? The following are some guidelines that will help you to manage a larger group of preschool children.

i) Make it very clear to children what they can or cannot do. This aspect should be taken care of even in a smaller group, but it becomes more important when you are managing a larger group, because you are not able to supervise all the children at the same time. By and large, children will follow instructions if these are clearly stated. In case a child continues to do something that is forbidden, talk to the child separately.

ii) Avoid situations where children are likely to get into fights. If children who are doing quiet work, like drawing or reading, are sitting next to a group of children who are playing with water, there are chances that the quiet group will be disturbed and a fight may begin. The worker should make arrangements so that children work in different areas if possible.

Younger children tend to fight over the same toys. Some of them can be distracted by taking them outside to play or involving them in another activity.

iii) In a large group of children, there will always be those who are not listening to you. They may be talking to each other or be busy in some different activity. To draw the attention of such children, you may use a musical instrument or a puppet. Children will learn to respond to a particular sound of an instrument as a signal to attend to the worker, who may wish them to get into a circle or a line. Sometimes when children become rowdy, switching over to a song or beginning a story may attract their attention and quieten them.

iv) Whenever the group is large, divide children into smaller groups and get them busy in different activities. Smaller groups are easier to manage. After some time these groups interchange their activities and, in this way, all children get a chance to play with different materials. For example, when the worker has only five sets of puzzles, one box of paints and one set of blocks, she should divide the children into three groups, with each group being given different play materials.

Sometimes, the indoor space available in your centre may be inadequate to manage a large group of children. In such a situation, you can divide the children into two groups and send one of the groups for outdoor play under the supervision of
another worker and involve the other half in indoor free play under your guidance. After some time, you can interchange the groups, so that all the children get the opportunity for both types of activities. When you have to carry on a relatively quiet indoor activity, all the children can come together in a group.

If you have children of different age groups in your centre, say toddlers as well as preschoolers, divide them into two groups and involve them in different activities. When you send the toddlers out for play, you can carry out a structured learning activity with the preschoolers indoors. When the toddlers are sleeping, you can leave them under the care of the helper and take the preschoolers for a walk.

v) Sometimes all the children have to be brought together for group activity. When you have children of different ages at your centre, it is best to make them sit in two semi-circles—the outer semi-circle for the older children and the inner semi-circle for the younger children. This way you can give attention to all. While talking to such a mixed group of children, you must make sure that it is not only the older children who participate.

vi) A good sense of humour will help you in every situation.

vii) Wherever possible, involve the parents in helping you manage the children. If you are distributing food, a mother can be called in to help children wash hands, go to the toilet, distribute the plates and help children in eating their food. If you are taking the children out for a walk or a trip, ask some parents to help you in supervising. Of course, planning for all this will have to be done earlier.

These suggestions are with respect to the preschoolers. But what does one do when one has a large group of infants and toddlers? There is only one way to manage the situation and that is to get more workers. Toddlers and infants, particularly the latter, need individual attention for longer periods in a day and you cannot organize group activities with them. A large group is difficult to handle alone and can leave you, as well as the children, frustrated.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) Read the following statements carefully and state whether you agree or disagree with them. Give reasons for your views.

a) One can organize many group activities with toddlers.

b) One will have to allow more time for each activity when working with toddlers.
c) There should be a continuity in concepts and skills that you impart from one day to the next.

d) Toddlers and infants will need frequent feeding and resting periods.

e) The educator must rigidly adhere to the schedule she has formulated.

f) One way to manage a large group of children is to divide children into smaller groups and get them busy in different activities.

30.12 SUMMING UP

In this Unit you have read about one of the aspects in organizing a centre, that is, planning the curriculum. It is important to plan what play activities you will carry out with children from one day to the next, throughout the year. Planning the curriculum gives a direction, a focus to the programme.

The first step towards formulating a schedule of activities is to identify the long term goals of the programme. Once you have identified what it is that you want the children to learn and know by the end of their stay with you, list the short term goals. Based on these short term goals, select the play activities that will help in achieving them. Subsequently, formulate daily and weekly schedules.

The schedule of activities will depend upon whether there are infants, toddlers or preschoolers in your centre and whether your centre operates for half-day or full-day.
While formulating schedules for toddlers and preschoolers, you must keep certain principles in mind. These are:

- Over a period of a week there must be a few activities for each area of development.
- There should be a balance between structured activities and free play, indoor and outdoor activities, relaxed activities and those requiring concentration, vigorous and restful activities, group and individual activities.
- Each day you must carry out some activities that the children are familiar with and some that are new for them.
- There should be a routine in activities from day-to-day, since this gives children a feeling of security.

One of the ways to formulate daily and weekly schedules is to identify the activities that have to be carried out everyday, fix the time periods for these, and in the remaining time, schedule the play activities. The arrival and departure of children as well as the snack time are routine. In a full-day centre, children will have lunch, a nap after that, and a light snack at mid-afternoon.

Maintain a routine in play activities as well. Try to organize outdoor and indoor free play, and structured activities at certain fixed times in a day.

One of the ways you can plan the activities is to select a certain theme and build play activities around it. These can be spread across the week and that topic then becomes the project for the week. Keeping these aspects in mind, you can plan schedules for half-day and full-day centres. You have read some examples of these in the text. If you involve the preschoolers in planning, both the programme as well as the children will benefit.

It is necessary to keep one aspect in mind while formulating schedules and that is—the schedules are only a framework, a guideline for action. Do not adhere rigidly to them. A good schedule should allow for flexibility, adaptation and change. You must be able to modify your plans keeping in mind the interest of children.

While planning a curriculum for older toddlers, the same principles hold true. However, there are some differences. These are:

- you will not be able to organize many group activities with them
- you will have to allow more time for each activity
- the nature of activities you will carry out, will be at a different cognitive and language level.

An example of a full-day schedule has been given in the text. For infants and younger toddlers, you will need to plan on an individual basis. The routine will be guided by their sleep and waking pattern and it will vary from one child to the other. You will need to keep some play material and activities ready, which you can give to infants when they are alert and active.

30.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Planning the curriculum will give a focus and a direction to the activities at the centre; it will help the worker to achieve her goals; it will give her an idea about what the children have achieved over a certain period of time. Through planning, the worker can ensure that the programme does not neglect a particular area of development.

2) Long term goals are the skills, abilities, concepts and values that you want the children to acquire after they have completed their stay at your centre. They are statements about how you think you will guide children's development during the period they are with you.
3) The following are some short term goals that will help you in realizing the long term goal of “Providing opportunities for goal directed behaviour”:

- give infants opportunities to handle toys and other play material
- give infants opportunities to explore freely
- help infants solve immediate simple problem situations

These short-term goals must be met each day. Thus they become your daily goals.

In Unit 11 you have read about play activities for infants. For example give infants toys to play with. As you converse with them and point out the consequences of their actions, they will begin to perceive the link between their actions and the effect on things.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) The aspects to be considered when planning schedules are:

- over a period of a week, there should be a few activities related to each area of development
- there should be a balance between structured and free play activities, outdoor and indoor activities, vigorous and restful activities, activities requiring concentration and those that are relaxed
- there should be enough time for children to complete each activity, i.e., there should be a reasonable pace

2) The possibilities of activities are many. But keeping the principles for activity selection in mind, there are some that would be more suitable compared to others. The following are some suggestions as regards what can be done.

In the time period 10.15 a.m.-11.00 a.m. on Monday, it would be a good idea to organize painting and drawing activities. Since the educator would have talked about colours in the morning, this will give children a chance to experiment with colours. Give the children the choice to paint or to draw using crayons or colour pencils. As they carry out the activity, the educator can draw their attention to the colours they are using, as well as to the new colours that can be made by mixing different colours. Since the activity gives some freedom to children to choose what they want to do, it keeps a balance in the schedule, as it comes after a structured activity.

Since during the day children would like an opportunity for indoor free play, this can be scheduled in the time period 12.15 p.m.-12.45 p.m. Various play materials like blocks, puzzles, books, dolls and other material for role play can be put out and children can choose.

On Tuesday morning the children are going out for a walk. It is possible that the walk extends into the next time period 10.15 a.m.-11.00 a.m. When children come back to the centre, the educator can carry out a discussion about what the children saw during the walk. Children will want to talk about the experience and they are likely to have many questions. Since the focus of the walk was colour, the discussion can highlight this aspect. If children have collected some flowers or leaves, they can be put on display in one corner. Later the educator can show the children how to preserve these.

Keeping in mind the principle that children prefer a routine, outdoor play can be scheduled in the time period after the snacks.

Children enjoy puppet shows greatly. The morning’s activities on Wednesday will appeal to children’s fantasy and imagination. It would be a good idea to carry out activities related to the puppet show in the time period 10.15 a.m.-11.00 a.m. Children will want to handle the puppets. Encourage them to do so. They may get involved in their own pretend stories and games. If the educator lays out material for painting and drawing at this time, children’s drawings are likely to centre around the theme of the puppet show. Some children may want to discuss what they saw with the educator.
Outdoor play may be scheduled between 11.30 a.m.-12.15 p.m.

The preschool centre had planned to celebrate the festival of Diwali, which was to be celebrated on the following Monday. Keeping this in mind, the educator organized a discussion around this theme on Thursday morning. Since the room has to be decorated for the festival, it would be a good idea to involve children in making the decorations. Therefore, following the discussion on Diwali, she can lay out materials for painting, drawing and collage as well as clay. Children can make greeting cards. The educator can also help them to make lamps from clay which can be lighted on the day of the celebrations.

After carrying out the structured activity on Friday morning, the educator can begin with decorating the room for the celebrations on Monday. Involve each child in doing something. Some can stick the paintings on the walls; others can arrange the mats or chairs under supervision. Some can make paintings on the floor. If the decorations are over by snack time, organize outdoor play between 11.30 a.m. and 12.15 p.m. If not, then continue with these in this time period. Children will be tired after a day’s hectic activity by the time it is afternoon. Therefore, between 12.15 p.m.-12.45 p.m. ask them to choose some restful indoor play activity.

3) Children can be involved in
   - planning the play activities
   - arranging and decorating the room
   - cleaning up
   - distributing food at mealtimes
   - suggesting places for visits

Check Your Progress Exercise 3
1) a) Disagree. Toddlers, by and large, play by themselves. Playing together and cooperating during play comes during preschool years.

   b) Agree. Toddlers, as compared to preschoolers, will take longer to complete an activity and wind it up.

   c) Agree. A continuity will provide a link in the activities carried out each day. Besides, when children are learning new concepts, they must come upon them repeatedly through a variety of play activities. A continuity in activities will help in this.

   d) Agree.

   e) Disagree. In fact, the hallmark of a good schedule is its flexibility. The schedule should be open to adaptation and change, based on the suggestions of children.

   f) Agree. In this way, there will be fewer chances of a dispute and it will also be easier for you to supervise the children. This arrangement works well when there is limited space and play equipment.