

Blocks are essential materials in the classroom. Through block play and building, mathematical concepts are explored and children develop an understanding of physical science concepts as well. Children move through the stages of block building at different ages and levels. They may move back and forth through the stages and move quickly through the stages when given opportunities to explore with block play. The stages of block play are listed below with some of the characteristics of each stage.

Carrying (Ages 1-3)

This is the earliest stage of block building for a young child. Blocks are not used for construction at this stage. The young child will:

- Move blocks from one place to another.
- Explore blocks by touching and tapping together to create sounds.



Building Rows and Stacking (Ages 2-4)

This is the beginning of the building stage for young children. They will begin by stacking blocks in:

- Horizontal rows
- Vertical stacks
- Using much repetition



Bridging (Ages 3-4)

This is the earliest type of technical building for a young child. Characteristics include:

- Child leaves a space between two blocks and then connects the space with a third block.
- Child will stack towers and connect with a block to create bridges during the latter part of this stage.



Enclosures (Age 4)

Creating enclosures is an early stage of technical building for a child. The child will:

- Place blocks to enclose a space on the floor.
- Begins to create structures after enclosing the space on the floor by stacking blocks.



Decorative Patterns (Ages 4-5)

- Child uses blocks to create balance using different shapes and sizes.
- Child uses blocks to create patterns and designs in their structures.
- Symmetrical designs are included.
- Structures are not usually named.



Multi-Level Building (Ages 5+)

This stage includes planning and integrating more detailed patterns and design.

- Several different enclosures may be joined together.
- Blocks used to form multi-level structures using varying types/sizes of blocks.



Naming and Using for Play (Ages 5+)

This is the most complex stage of block play. Children often:

- Build independently as well as collaboratively with others.
- Give names to structures related to form.
- Construct buildings to resemble actual structures.
- Integrate props and assign roles in dramatic play.

