Background Noise

Relevant Satellite Accreditation Standards

III. The Daily Program for Children

F. The schedule offers a balance of activities.

4. Children, particularly the very young, are protected from noise and activity that may be over-stimulating (including music, radio, and television).

J. Computers and audio-visual media are used only when they have a clear purpose and support children's development.

3. If the provider uses "passive" media such as television, films, and video, they are used appropriately and on a limited basis, rather than as regular daily events. Other activity options are also available, and children are not required to view the program. The provider talks with the children about what they are viewing.



The Basics

What is background noise?

Noise is everywhere. Adult brains are better equipped to filter out irrelevant environmental noises than the brains of young children. Background noise describes sounds unrelated to the main task at hand. Take a moment to pause and listen; maybe you hear the humming of the nearby road, a plane flying overhead, the draining of the dishwasher, or the television on in the next room. Background noise is dependent on an individual's primary focus. White noise, or a mixture of sound waves over a wide frequency range, is not considered background noise and has alternatively been shown to be helpful in increasing sleep quality.

How does it affect children's development?

A young brain is still maturing in its ability to integrate and process sensory information from the world into something meaningful. Background noise has been shown to hinder the development of speech and language skills, such as word learning and discriminative listening (Erickson & Newman, 2017; McMillan & Saffran, 2022). Research also suggests that background noise, specifically television exposure, is detrimental for young children's cognitive development when exposed during sleep and waking hours (Klatte et al., 2013; Nichols, 2022). Although it may seem young children are

not attending to a television on in the background, play has been shown to be affected. Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers spend less time engaged in an activity before moving to another when in noisy environments (Nichols, 2022). Background noises, particularly from television, also decrease the quality of adult interactions with children. Overall, managing exposure to unnecessary environmental noise is key to fostering optimal language and cognitive development in young children.

What can I do to decrease background noise?

The first step in mitigating background noise is to identify the sources. Noise from music, radio, and television can be both an educational tool and a learning hinderance. Use these controllable noise sources when there is active engagement and with an awareness of children's developmental level. If background noise is uncontrollable, such as in programs located in busy areas, using carpet, rugs, and curtains can help absorb sound and result in a quieter environment. For more information on background noise and its influence on development, see the attached resources below.

I want to learn more!

- Noise and its Effects on Children (Resource)
- Screen-Time Recommendations for Children Under Six (Article)
- Influences Of Background Noise on Infants and Children (Research article)
- The Effects of Background Speech on Early Word Learning (Research article)
- A Short Review on Noise Effects on Cognitive Performance in Children (Research article)
- The Context of Background TV Exposure and Children's Executive Functioning (Research article)