



THE CHILDHOOD SPACE

# The Five Lives of a Room

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*A simple way to read any child's space, and what it makes possible.*

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## HOW TO USE THIS

We usually ask whether a child's room looks good. The better question is what it lets a child do.

Five quick lenses for reading any space, a bedroom, a playroom, even a corner of the kitchen floor. Crouch down to your child's height, and go through them one at a time.

### 01 · MOVE

## Can my child's body live here?

*Children think and grow through movement. A room frozen for tidiness gives them nowhere to go.*

- Is there clear floor space to crawl, build, and spread out?
- Can they be active here, not only sit still?
- Is the floor a place they're allowed to play?

### 02 · REACH

## Can my child do things without me?

*What's within reach is what a child can choose. What's out of reach keeps them dependent.*

- Can they reach their own toys, books, and clothes?
- Can they get what they need without asking?
- Is anything good kept where they can see it but not touch it?

### 03 · RETREAT

## Is there somewhere to be small and quiet?

*Children need to be unseen sometimes, to rest, settle, and feel safe.*

- Is there a nook, den, or corner to hide in?
- Somewhere calm, away from the busyness?
- Can they be on their own for a while?

#### 04 · MAKE

## Can my child build, repeat, and leave things unfinished?

*Real play is slow and a little messy. A room that must stay tidy keeps interrupting it.*

- Are there open-ended materials, blocks, cloth, loose parts?
- Is some mess and process allowed?
- Can a half-built game stay standing overnight?

#### 05 · BELONG

## Does my child feel this is theirs?

*A space quietly tells a child whether they belong in it.*

- Is it set at their height, with their things?
- Are their marks, drawings, and choices present?
- Does it feel like theirs, not only yours?

**A space that can answer “yes” to these is doing real work, whatever it looks like.**

*A child's room is never just a room.*

#### WANT A CLOSER LOOK?

I read children's spaces the way a child does. Book a free 15-minute call, no pressure.  
[thechildhoodspace.com](https://thechildhoodspace.com) · [@thechildhoodspace](https://twitter.com/thechildhoodspace)

The thinking behind it: these five lenses are my own practitioner framework, grounded in early childhood research on movement and the body (WHO, 2019), children's autonomy and special places (Green, 2011; 2013), open-ended play (Nicholson, 1971), and belonging built through space (Lähdesmäki et al., 2022).