

# Improved living conditions in shared accommodation

Created by Save the Children Switzerland and IKEA Switzerland

A checklist for simple, effective changes

In collaboration with



Save the Children

# Refugees come to Switzerland with many different experiences. They have often lived through violence, insecurity, or displacement. After their arrival, they need protection, orientation, and the chance to organise their daily lives again. This is especially important for children, who need a safe place to play, explore, and relax.

Save the Children and IKEA have a common goal: to improve the living conditions of children and families in shared accommodation in a lasting way. Living is more than having a roof over your head. It should provide protection, privacy, a place to rest, and help bring structure to daily life.

This checklist supports shared accommodation shelters to improve living conditions through simple changes. Save the Children brings its knowledge of children's rights, the needs of children and families, and the challenges of shared accommodation. IKEA contributes its experience in designing and furnishing rooms for different needs.

## What this checklist offers

---

- Concrete ideas on how to improve rooms with simple, low-cost measures
- Suggestions for the sustainable use of furniture, materials, and equipment

## How to use this checklist

---

- You don't have to do everything at once
- For each area, choose one or two ideas that fit your budget and your rooms
- Even small changes can have a big effect

## Sustainability

---

Shared rooms in asylum accommodations are used by many people, and furnishings can wear out quickly. Choosing durable furniture and materials and providing clear guidance on their use and care can make them last much longer.

Use existing resources where possible, for example, donations, items from second-hand shops, or used furniture. Always check for quality, safety, and whether the furniture or materials are suitable.

## Requirements for furniture and materials

---

Make sure that furniture and materials meet these criteria:

- ① **Flexible and adaptable:** Furniture should be easy to move and adapt to different needs.
- ② **Robust and durable:** Use strong materials (for example, metal or treated wood) that can withstand intensive use.
- ③ **Stable and safe:** Furniture must be stable, correctly installed, and fixed to the wall where needed to avoid accidents. Follow fire safety rules.
- ④ **Easy to care for:** Use materials that are easy to clean and maintain, especially in shared areas (for example, washable covers).

# Sleeping in shared rooms

Sleep and rest are important for health. In shared rooms, you can create more individuality and privacy with textiles, lamps, and lockable storage.

## Needs

---

### Privacy

## Changes

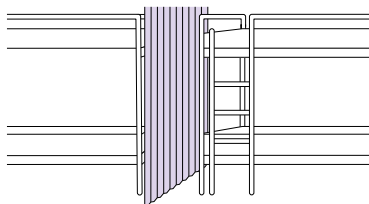
---

Use simple dividers to create small private areas around beds, for example, with curtains, changing panels, or acoustic panels.

---

## Furnishing ideas

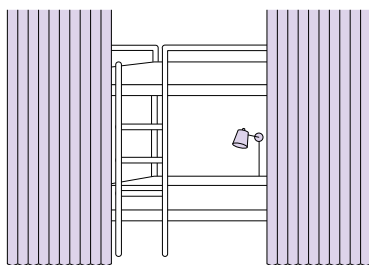
---



### Individual control of light

Provide a reading lamp near the bed and a way to darken the sleeping area. This helps residents decide when they want light and when they want to sleep.

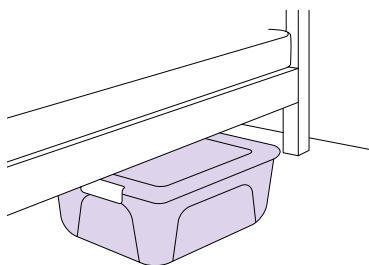
---



### Enough storage for personal items

Offer enough storage for personal items. Storage should be robust while also being easy to carry and clean, for example, boxes, small cupboards or sideboards.

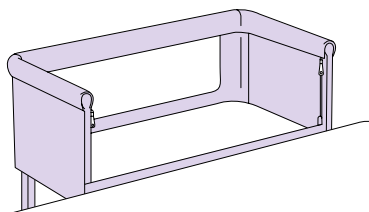
---



### Specific needs of babies

Provide a safe sleeping place for babies, such as a side-bed or a cot. Have everything that the mother and baby need ready, for example a nursing pillow.

---



# Common rooms

Common rooms should offer space for shared activities and meeting others, while also providing privacy and quiet spaces. Well designed rooms can help reduce stress and improve well being. Organise rooms so that they can be used in different ways, for example, by using dividers or arranging time slots for different groups.

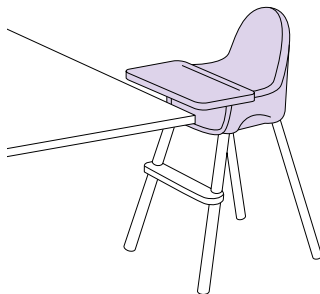
## Needs

## Changes

## Furnishing ideas

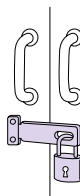
### Pleasant atmosphere during meals

Create a pleasant atmosphere during meals by having small dining groups with dividers between tables. Ask parents what children need to feel more comfortable in the dining room, for example, highchairs, a separate children's area, or child-friendly dishes.



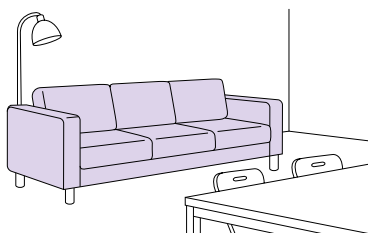
### Enough storage in common rooms

Provide enough lockable cupboards, shelves, or boxes for personal items and shared materials.



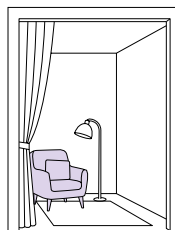
### Places for meeting and shared activities

Create rooms where people can meet, talk, and spend time together. Think of different needs and interests.



### Quiet areas for rest and focused activities

Set up quiet areas for resting, reading, learning, or praying. Make sure that children can study and do homework without being disturbed.



# Playrooms and playgrounds for children

Play is important for children's well being and development. Children need places where they can do so safely and without being disturbed. Create visible and safe play areas inside and outside, for example a play corner, a playroom, or a playground.

## Needs

---

### Playing outside

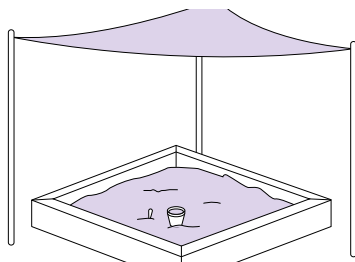
## Changes

---

Create safe outdoor areas for children. Provide suitable equipment for different ages. Think of the needs of small children, for example, by providing sun protection and seating for parents and caregivers.

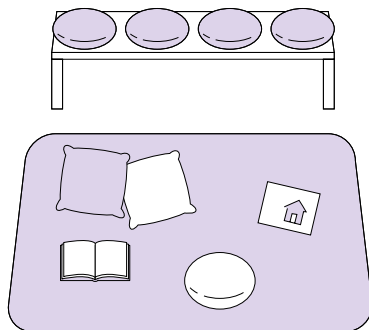
## Furnishing ideas

---



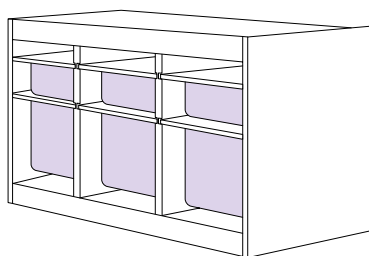
### Playing inside

Create a visible and inviting children's corner or playroom. Think of different needs: children should be able to move, play, and rest. Make floor play possible and provide drawing and craft materials at a table. Choose robust and easy-to-clean furniture. Provide seating for parents and caregivers.



### Independent and safe access to toys

Place safe, durable toys at children's height so they can play and tidy up by themselves. Store dangerous and delicate items out of reach in lockable cupboards.



## Needs

---

### Age-appropriate play and development

## Changes

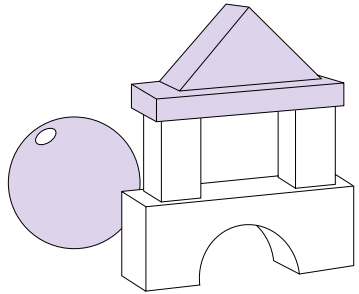
---

Provide toys for different ages, for example wooden blocks, soft balls, felt pens and paper, a play kitchen, or a children's rug. Choose materials that support different skills such as movement, creativity, fine motor skills, and imagination.

---

## Furnishing ideas

---



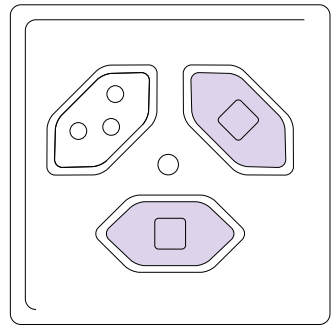
## Safety

---

Make sure your accommodation is safe. Protect sockets with child safety covers and fix cables. Secure windows, balconies, and stairs. Fix furniture so it cannot tip over.

Store scissors, glue sticks, and small parts in separate boxes out of reach of small children.

---



# Bathrooms and washing facilities

Personal care and hygiene are a very private matter for many people. Bathrooms and toilets should offer safety and privacy and should fit the needs and habits of families.

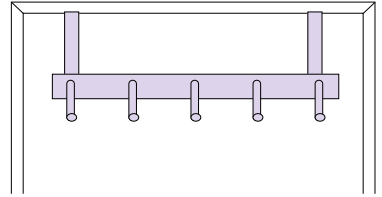
## Needs

**Privacy and enough space in bathrooms and toilets**

## Changes

Make sure there is enough privacy, shelf space, and hooks in the bathrooms and washing facilities.

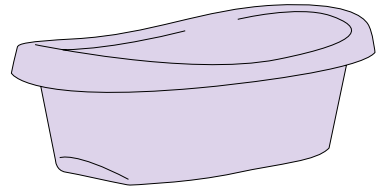
## Furnishing ideas



**Specific needs of babies and small children**

Make bathrooms and toilets child-friendly.

Provide suitable equipment, for example, a changing area, a potty for small children, a step stool, and a baby bath.



## Do you need support?

**For questions about rooms and furnishings:**

IKEA for Business  
ikea.business.ch@ikea.com  
056 580 01 60

**For questions about child protection and child friendly accommodation:**

Save the Children  
info@savethechildren.ch  
044 267 74 70

