

Loose Parts in Your Home



Have you ever noticed your child receive a gift and they were more interested in playing with the wrapping paper, the ribbon, the box that the gift came in rather than the toy given as the gift?

You are not alone and many adults often find that children seem to be more curious about the materials such as a cardboard box, rather than a toy that has one set purpose.

Now that we are currently spending more time at home, your child may have started to become bored with playing with the same toys and you may be wondering how you can keep them engaged without necessarily purchasing more toys. Children need materials that are open ended to sustain their play, these materials are loose parts.

The term “loose parts” came from Simon Nicholson an architect in the 1970’s. He believed that all children are creative and by having loose parts in their environment helps to foster their creativity. By including loose parts into children’s play it can help bring new ideas, make play fun again and keep them busy.

Check out the story Not a Box by Antoinette Portis which demonstrates the many possible ways an object, in this case a box, can transform it into different things using imagination

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMCKXaFsmCA>

What are Loose parts?

- Open end materials that are **movable**, can be **transformed** and **manipulated** in many different ways
- Have **no set of directions or instructions** but can be **used freely** by children to create and explore
- **Natural or man-made** materials
- Loose parts can be used on their own or in combination with other materials

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- Can be used by **all ages even infants**. When introducing Loose parts to infants/ toddlers consider objects that allow the child to explore through all senses including taste, which may mean finding larger objects that are safe to put in the mouth. Supervision is always recommended.

Loose parts don't have to cost a lot and can be often found around the home or outside in nature. They're a great way to reuse, renew and recycle. You or your child may have been including it in their play without even knowing it.

Here are some examples of loose parts:

- Cardboard boxes
- Tree Sticks/Twigs
- Paper Towel Rolls
- Rocks/stones
- Buttons Pine Cones
- Lids from Containers/ Bottle Caps
- Leaves
- CD's
- Seashells
- Keys
- Mud
- Pieces of fabric/ Scarves
- Wood pieces



Why include Loose Parts?

There are many benefits for including Loose parts into children's play. Many curriculum areas such as math skills, science, art, language and literacy are all explored with the use of loose parts. Play with loose parts also allow children to meet their developmental milestones. One study suggest that children's creativity and imagination become enhanced and they engage in a deeper level of thinking through the use of loose parts.

How to include them in Play?

Search around your home, there are many objects around the house that can be used as loose parts. Go outside, in the backyard or in your neighbourhood, you and your child can start collecting various objects from nature. Loose parts can be stored in baskets, bowls or containers and can be placed in areas where your child typically play so they can have access to them when they want.

As you start your journey or continue to, include loose parts into your child's play remember let your child take the lead, allow them to discover, experiment, play with the materials freely with out direction. You may be surprise to see all the wonderful ideas and things your child creates with the use of loose parts. The possibilities are endless. Here is a 2- minute video about using loose parts in your backyard : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1J3AhaOPPCg>

Sources

Daly, Lisa., Beloglovsky, Miriam. (2015). Loose Parts: Inspiring Play in Young Children. Community Playthings. <http://www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/2015/loose-parts>

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A case study approach: Investigating how loose part play impacts on children's creativity and the knowledge practitioners have to effectively enhance learning and development. https://www.don.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/dissertation_carriann_marsden_A-case-study-approach-Investigating-how-loose-part-play-impacts-on-childrens-creativity.pdf

Theory of Loose Parts <https://ojs.lboro.ac.uk/SDEC/article/download/1204/1171>