

Activities for Preschoolers at Home – Issue #4



Affiliated Services
for Children & Youth

Loose parts to support play at home What are loose parts?

Loose parts are materials that offer children opportunities to use natural, found materials and objects from their environments. They are materials with no specific set of directions that can be used alone or combined with other materials. Children can manipulate the materials in multiple ways and however they would like. Loose parts can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, and taken apart and put back together in various ways. The result is that loose parts provide experiences for children to be creative, curious and imaginative. Loose parts help children make sense of the natural world around them.

- Problem Solving
- Engineering
- Creativity
- Concentration
- Hand-eye coordination
- Fine motor development
- Gross motor development
- Language and vocabulary building
- Mathematical thinking
- Scientific thinking
- Literacy
- Social/emotional development



Look in your recycle bin before putting it out. For example, lids of containers are a great loose part separate from their container or you could use the two pieces and make a game matching the lid to the base.

Here is a list of loose parts you may have around the house for children to use in their play.

Natural

shells, pebbles, pine cones, leaves, seeds, sticks, twigs, acorns, corks, rocks

Wooden

clothespins, boards, beads, coasters, stir sticks, berry baskets, chopsticks, popsicle sticks, thread spools, paint stir sticks, kindling

Metal

canning lids, tin foil, nuts and bolts, clamps, keys, aluminum pie plates (various sizes), bells, locks, cookie tins, metal lids (from frozen juice lids), paper clips

Plastic

juice or milk jugs, food containers, bowls, lids, shampoo bottles and lids, CD's, coasters, coffee cans, bread tags, berry baskets, bottle caps, bubble wrap, chopsticks, clear mailing tubes, diaper wipe containers, buttons, bobbins, plexiglass sheets

Paper and Fabrics

newspapers, magazines, shredded paper, cardboard, paper towel tubes, paper plates, bowls, cups, boxes, shoeboxes, gift wrap, paper bags, paper towel tubes, cellophane, catalogues, cereal and food boxes, coffee filters, envelopes, used greeting cards, golf tees, flyers, used calendars, used gift bags, tissue paper, butcher paper, sheets, towels, shower curtains, blankets, pillows, ribbons, lace, fabric scraps, burlap or canvas scraps, felt, scarves

Other

game pieces, dice, zippers, buttons, rubberbands, balls (golf, ping-pong, tennis), cork hot plates, cotton balls, cotton batting, cotton swabs, curtain rings, cutting boards, picture frames, hair curlers, knobs (old from appliances or dressers), napkin rings, costume jewelry, old puzzle pieces, paint sample chips, placemats, sandpaper, string, twine, kitchen utensils, sponges, measuring cups, measuring spoons, measuring tapes, rulers, pails, buckets, plant containers, plastic rain gutters, wood planks, hoses, tubing