

Looking for alternatives to using worksheets? Consider these possibilities....

To strengthen fine motor skills...

- Provide children with child-safe scissors to cut playdough
- Use plastic tweezers to sort small objects such as pom-poms into a divided dish

To promote emergent writing skills...

- Use shaving cream and a cookie sheet to encourage children to form letters, shapes and numbers using their fingers
- Provide a variety of writing tools

To promote oral language and vocabulary-building skills...

- Provide children with concrete objects that can be manipulated
- Ask open-ended questions
- Read stories and provide props for retelling the story

To strengthen problem-solving skills...

- Play simple games that require turn-taking
- Provide sensory activities such as sand and waterplay
- Have children propose solutions to problems encountered
- Give children a variety of puzzles

Why don't worksheets belong in early learning & kindergarten programs?



These questions and answers may help you understand why worksheets shouldn't be used as developmental tools.

Q1: Don't worksheets help develop fine motor writing skills?

A1: There can be many activities that help develop children's fine motor skills. Avoid using colouring books or connect the dot activities, instead try open-ended drawing and writing activities using a variety of writing tools such as markers, crayons and pencils and allow the children to use their imagination and creativity while developing their fine motor skills.

Q2: How come worksheets don't work?

A2: Because worksheets take away from oral language development, creativity, movement, problem-solving opportunities and the sensory experiences necessary for brain development, human interactions and friendships. Worksheets only tell you what the child knows, generally provide only one right answer and do not let children use their creativity or encourage open-ended questions to expand their knowledge and interests.

Q3: If worksheets don't provide developmentally-appropriate learning experiences for children, then what does?

A3: Children learn best through hands-on experiences, real life experiences, interactive learning and purposeful play.

Q4: How do I explain to parents and caregivers that children learn best through purposeful play?

A4: Play stimulates physical, social, emotional and cognitive development in the early years. Children need time, space, materials and support from informed people in their lives in order to become master players. Play also provides children with the opportunities to build vocabulary, problem solve, explore and invent. Purposeful play is based on the child's interest and desires where children can choose to play with others or alone.

Q5: But what if the parents and caregivers want evidence their child is learning? Are worksheets the only way to demonstrate their learning?

A5: There is a handful of ways to provide parents and caregivers with evidence that their child is learning. Here are a few examples:

- Observe constantly, take photos and create observation records
- Show the parents or caregivers work samples that the child has made
- Create a display board explaining their child's play
- Provide monthly newsletters stating what activities have happened in the classroom and the learning experience that was gained by this activity.

This will help parents and caregivers understand the value of developmentally-appropriate activities and will reassure them that their child is learning and growing through purposeful play.