



Loose Parts

A GUIDE & INVENTORY OF LOOSE PARTS

CREATED BY

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Where Curiosity Grows

WHAT ARE LOOSE PARTS?

LOOSE PARTS ARE...

Objects that spark curiosity, innovation, creativity, questions, problems, ideas, and emotions. This is why children are so naturally drawn to these beautiful and engaging items. Children are scientists, always asking questions in their play and conducting investigations to discover the answers. Some of their questions may be...

"How does Mommy/Daddy make dinner?"

"I wonder what will happen if I place this object on the edge of the slide?"

"How do cars roll?"

"I wonder how that building is so TALL?"



Loose parts such as wood planks, tires, and boxes would provide the opportunity to create their own slide and discover speed and distance. Providing pots and pans, mud, water, and leaves would create the opportunity for a child to create concoctions and explore different mixing and cooking methods. Building with blocks, large pieces of wood and tin cans would allow for exploration into building vertically and discovering balance, structure, and engineering.



The term loose parts was coined by Simon Nicholson and he discusses how creativity is not only for the gifted, that everyone is creative when provided environments with the right kind and number of variables. Nicholson suggests many different variables beyond physical materials, such as chemical reactions and fire. Loose parts can be manipulated, transported and transformed. For children to make sense of their world this is key, and loose parts provide endless opportunities for their innate curiosity and wonder to aid in their development.

THE POWER OF LOOSE PARTS

LITERACY

How do milk lids, boxes, and shells help my child's literacy skills? These items provide opportunities of rich language to be used, such as ridges, smooth, indigo, gigantic, fold, hard, ocean, recyclable, ect. Just as there are endless possibilities with these items, there are endless ways to describe them, increasing your vocabulary.



SOCIAL

How will glass stones, q-tips, juice lids, and tiles aid my child in their social skills? While creating with these items children engage in complex social situations that involve opportunities for problem solving, negotiating, listening to others ideas, collaborative projects, and dramatic play.

COGNITIVE

How will cardboard tubes, rain gutters, and scarves develop my child's ability to make decisions and develop math skills? Play is filled with decisions and math skills, such as stacking cardboard tubes to make it balance, creating a ramp system with rain gutters to discover speed and distance. Children use deep critical thinking skills to observe and evaluate which objects will work best for their questions they are discovering.



THE POWER OF LOOSE PARTS

SENSES

How do glass bottles, cardboard tubes, tree stumps, grass, and sand help with my child's senses? Loose parts come in all shapes, sizes, weights and are visually appealing, have different sounds, textures, and tastes! A mixture of these items help our children develop their sensory systems which also aid with behaviours and self-regulation.



PHYSICAL

How will giant boxes, tires, glass stones, leaves, and fabrics help my child's gross and fine motor skills? These items all provide many different opportunities to be manipulated, transported, and be creative with. Carrying a wood plank develops arm, shoulder and back muscles, while creating with glass stones develops fine motor skills such as the pincer grasp.

EMOTIONAL

How will leaves, sticks and bubble wrap aid in my child's emotional development? Connecting with nature is a naturally calming tool. Working through aggression by jumping and popping bubble wrap is a strategy but also provides sensory input into muscles and joints that helps children self-regulate.



- WOODEN BEADS
- POPSICLE STICKS
- WOODEN RINGS
- NAPKIN RINGS
- CANDLE STICKS
- JEWELRY BOXES
- SPOOLS
- WOODEN PEGS
- BOWLS

- PALLETS
- CABLE SPOOLS
- UPCYCLED CHAIR LEGS
- KITCHEN UTENSILS
- WOODEN DOWELS
- WOODEN CRAFT PIECES
- OLD PICTURE FRAMES

- TREE STUMPS
- WOOD COOKIES
- BLOCKS
- SCRAP PIECES
- CLOTHES PINS
- UPCYCLED
BANISTOR
- WOOD PLANKS



- COLOURED GLASS
- STONES
- MOSAIC TILES
- FROSTED GLASS
- MARBLES
- BOTTLES
- VASES
- CERAMIC
- HOUSEHOLD ITEMS
- DECORATIVE
- BOWLS
- SEA GLASS
- PRISMS
- GLASS TILES
- NAPKIN RINGS
- MIRRORS
- FLOOR SAMPLES
- DECORATIVE TRAYS



METAL

- JUICE LIDS
- MASON JAR LIDS
- SCREWS
- BOLTS
- WASHERS
- NAPKIN RINGS
- KITCHEN UTENSILS
- PLANT POTS
- COINS
- KEYS
- LICENSE PLATES
- TIN CANS
- BOTTLE TOPS
- TIN FOIL
- SODA CAN TOPS
- METAL HANGERS
- PAPER CLIPS
- METAL BASKETS
- METAL RACKS
- JEWELRY
- SERVING TRAYS
- WIRES
- RAIN GUTTERS



FABRICS

- STRING
- YARN
- RIBBION
- FELT
- ROPE
- MESH
- CURTAINS
- TABLE CLOTHS
- LACE
- FOAM
- BURLAP
- SCRAP MATERIALS
- OLD CLOTHING
- OLD SHEETS
- THREAD
- FAKE GRASS
- FAKE PLANTS
- FAKE FLOWERS
- CROCHET
- FABRIC SAMPLES
- TARPS
- BLANKETS
- CARPET SAMPLES
- LEATHER
- SCARVES
- TIES
- SILK
- TWINE



PLASTICS

- STRAWS
- PLASTIC CUPS
- FILM REELS
- FILM CANISTORS
- MILK LIDS
- SEWING SPOOLS
- BOTTLES
- HANGERS
- DVD'S
- SHOWER HOOKS
- POKER CHIPS
- DOMINOS
- CRAFT MATERIALS
- PLASTIC JEWELS
- SEQUENCE
- BEADS
- CONTAINERS
- PVC PIPE
- BREAD BAG TIES
- CLIPS
- BRACELTS
- JEWELRY
- BALLS
- HAIR ROLLERS
- HULLA HOOPS
- CELOPHANE
- RAIN GUTTERS



PACKAGING

- BOXES
- CARDBOARD TUBES
- CORKS
- BUBBLE WRAP
- PAPER
- CARDBOARD PIECES
- EGG CARTONS
- PAPER ROLLS
- RIBBON WHEELS
- YARN SPOOLS
- CARDBOARD RINGS
- ENVELOPES
- NEWSPAPER / FLYERS
- FOOD PACKAGING
- GIFT BOXES
- EXTRA LONG CARDBOARD PIECES
- GIFT BAGS
- PAPER BAGS



NATURAL

- STICKS
- LEAVES
- TREE STUMPS
- WOOD COOKIES
- ROCKS
- SHELLS
- MOSS
- DIRT
- WATER
- DRIED FLOWERS
- DRIED FRUIT
- SEEDS
- ACORNS
- PINE CONES
- CONKERS
- GRASS
- SAND
- BARK
- GRAVEL
- MULCH
- PINE NEEDLES
- VANILLA BEANS
- CINNIMON STICKS
- DRIFT WOOD
- HERBS
- SPICES
- GARDEN ROCKS



OTHER VARIABLES

- SMELLS
- ELECTRICITY
- MAGNETISM
- GRAVITY
- GASES & FLUIDS
- CHEMICAL INTERACTIONS

- FIRE
- COOKING
- SOUND
- MUSIC
- MOTION
- PEOPLE

- ANIMALS
- PLANTS
- WORDS
- CONCEPTS
- IDEAS



RESOURCES

Find resources such as books, websites, articles, videos, podcasts, and so much more. Check back often as more are added all the time!



Are you new to Loose Parts?
Want to learn more & where to start?
Need ideas for Infants, Toddlers, &
Preschoolers?

If you are a novice ECE or a parent
new to loose parts, I have a mini
ONLINE WORKSHOP!

