

Smart Play Network: Loose Parts Play

An information sheet

The theory of 'loose parts' was first proposed by architect Simon Nicholson in the 1970s. Nicholson believed that it is the 'loose parts' in our environment that will empower our creativity. He also stated that, "all children are gifted, born as creative beings, curious about the world and keen to discover new things".

Nicholson observed that in any environment, the degree of creativity and inventiveness is directly proportional to the number of variables in it. Nicholson suggested that a beach is a good example of a loose parts environment, with plenty of moveable and adaptable materials, such as sand, water, rocks and shells. Loose parts are the reason that most children are absorbed in play for hours on a beach.

Loose parts are materials which can be easily moved, carried, combined, re-designed and put back together in different ways. There are no specific directions associated to building the materials alone or combining them together.

Sourcing Materials

From **Nature**

pine cones, shells, mud, twigs, pebbles & grass

From **Home**;

blankets, boxes, kitchen utensils, cushions & junk materials

From **Scrapstores**

there are many scrapstores over the country which sell / give waste from companies as play items .

Loose parts can be seen as natural or synthetic;

- Sand
- Soil
- Fabric
- Tyres
- Wood
- Pallets
- Road cones
- Cardboard tubes
- Balls
- Rope
- Buckets
- Crates
- Tubes
- Guttering



Using New, Interesting and Novel Items

Scrap or junk are terms which many individuals conceptualize as waste. However scrap materials can be non-directive toys, props and equipment allowing a child to exercise their creativeness and imagination. Combining for example an egg carton, a plastic bottle and a few rubber bands automatically offers a problem solving activity. Settings that allow children to use scrap materials promote a child's cognitive ability and innovation. Because loose materials are adaptable, what might be used for a space shuttle one day could be used to make a computer the next day. Scrap and loose parts play all work on the principle that non-directive materials support a greater flexible degree of behaviour and support the notion of creativity whilst being cost effective. Adults should be able to stand back and allow the child to openly play the way they wish with the materials (within reason!) accepting the idea that their image of what a car should look like might be completely different from that of a child's for example.



Using Loose Parts in the Curriculum for Excellence

One of the best ways for a child to develop successfully is through play, according to Scotland's Play Strategy. Play is seen as an essential element for a happy childhood. Children's brains can grow and become usable as well as organised during a healthy play lifestyle. When practitioners are asked to reminisce about playing as a child many generate outside memories. Through integrated learning and outdoor experiences, whether in the playground or adventures further afield, an in depth relevance to the curriculum can be achieved compared to inside a classroom. Outdoor lessons associated with scrap materials and free play help children independently with recent research highlighting that this could be more effective than a classroom based activity in the early years of a child's school development.

Useful Resources/Links

www.scrapstoresuk.org

www.readingplay.co.uk

www.nurturestore.co.uk/free-play-with-loose-parts



Did you know?

Many businesses have a policy on corporate and social responsibility and on environmental sustainability. The donation of loose parts can often support them to implement this.