



5 LOOSE PARTS PLAY

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.

Loose parts are materials which can be easily moved, carried, combined and re-designed. 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 and grass.
- From **Home**: blankets, boxes, kitchen utensils, cushions and 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 * Guttering * Wood * Pallets *
Cardboard * Balls * Rope * Buckets * Crates * Tyres

Further Reading

www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Loose-Parts-Play-web.pdf

www.playscotland.org/parents-families/loose-parts-play/

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

Using New, Interesting and Novel Items

Scrap or junk are terms which many individuals conceptualise 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!

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. 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.

Did you know ?

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

Smart Play Network Members Support

Member you have access to telephone and email support. For more information about the topics covered in this guidance sheet, or any other queries you may have about your project, please contact us using: 0131 554 2620 or admin@smartplaynetwork.org