

A Guide to
Loose Parts
Play



When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understanding and ways of doing things.

All resources and equipment used in loose parts play should be checked for safety.

Families at Play

Families at Play is a series of information leaflets that offer enjoyable and exciting activities for you

Other leaflets available in the Families at Play series:

Physical Activity over 2's

Physical Activity under 2's

Messy Play over 2's

Messy Play under 2's

Water Play over 2's

Water Play under 2's

Sound and Music over 2's

Sound and Music under 2's

Mark Making over 2's

Mark Making under 2's

Playdough over 2's

Exploring under 2's

Loose Parts Play

Small World over 2's

Pretend Play under 2's



How much play value does a beach have? Aside from the buckets and spades, what do children play with?



Sand, water, shells, rocks, pebbles, sticks, seaweed:

Loose parts are the reason most children are absorbed in play for hours on a beach!

What are loose parts?

Loose parts are materials that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, and taken apart and put back together in multiple ways. They are materials with no specific set of directions that can be used alone or combined with other materials.

Why use them?

Encouraging children to use resources as they choose, can provide a wider range of opportunities than one that is purely adult led.

Children playing with loose parts are using more creativity and imagination and developing more skill and competence than they would playing with most modern, sometimes expensive, plastic toys. Children are drawn to new, interesting and novel items—and have a natural drive and ability to decide what to do with them in their play.

Loose parts are springboards for play, and are an essential element of a rich, child-centred play environment.



Where can I get loose parts?

In nature; pebbles, stones, rocks, leaves, conkers, acorns, pine cones, moss, bark, logs, sticks, twigs, grass, straw, shells, seaweed (if near the sea), natural sponges.

Found; (begged or borrowed) planks, tyres, milk-crates, guttering, cable drums, rope, off-cuts of wood, plant pots, plastic pipes, funnels.

Anything you can think of!

