

# Loose parts play



## WHAT ARE LOOSE PARTS?

### Loose parts:

- Are anything that can be moved, adapted, and manipulated during play.
- Have no rules or instructions - the children decide.
- Encourage open ended-play with no fixed purpose.
- Are used by children to create, transform, and engage with their environment.
- Can be natural or manmade.
- Can be large items, e.g. cable reels, planks, tyres, and pallets for construction, den building, and obstacle courses.
- Can be small items, e.g. string, cardboard, and bottle tops for creating models or pictures.
- Can be textiles and fabrics, e.g. tarpaulin, sheets, voile, and ribbons.
- Are anything that can be repurposed.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

### Loose parts:

- Nurture creativity, imagination, problem-solving skills, and physical development.
- Allow children to develop their own ideas.
- Promote social skills, communication, cooperation, negotiation, and teamwork.
- Allow children to manage risk and develop confidence and resilience.
- Are inclusive - children of all ages and abilities can take part.
- Provide valuable sensory experiences including different textures, sounds, smells, and shiny materials.
- Are low cost or no cost - they can be sourced from recycling or donated items.
- Can enhance any play space - sand, water, role play, imaginative play, sensory play, construction, and physical play.

## WHERE CAN I FIND LOOSE PARTS?

There are many options for obtaining loose parts, for example:

- Free and found donations from parents and staff (from home and garden).
- Local businesses - empty boxes, packaging, tyres, scrap material, and offcuts.
- Local parks - leaves, sticks, acorns, and conkers.
- Beach - shells, pebbles, and driftwood.

**TOP TIP:** Play Resource membership. For a small annual fee, you can access a wide variety of loose parts sourced from local businesses. Visit [playresource.org](http://playresource.org)

**The possibilities  
are endless!**

### UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Loose parts play supports children's:

- **Right to play** (Article 31)
- **Right to have their say** (Article 12)

Change and check loose parts regularly, and choose items carefully - appropriate to the age and stage of the child/ren. Avoid small items which could pose a choking hazard or be inserted into their nose or ears.

For younger children, always be aware of choking risks. Toys and loose parts intended for children under 36 months must not present a choking risk. A test can be carried out using a *small parts cylinder* - toys or loose parts that can fit entirely inside the cylinder are identified as choking hazards.

