

Loose parts: What are they? Where to find them? How to use them? (and where to store them! 😊)

Dear colleagues and parents and friends, I have been helping out these last months and my recent urge to make the best use of storage space has led me to want to facilitate access for the children to an ever greater choice of 'loose parts', with regard to texture, shape and potential. Loose parts are those things that can be moved, adapted, repurposed and used as building blocks in numerous creative endeavours. They are not finished, highly detailed items... they are basically 'interesting stuff', which leave the child as the driver of the project. I see it as being on a par with storytelling, where once again, the child has agency and is the only one who knows what they will make, or how the story will end. It is, in short, empowering. Because, unlike many early childhood activities, there are no 'right answers'.

What skills are potentially fostered in loose parts play?

- *Problem Solving*
- *Engineering*
- *Creativity*
- *Concentration*
- *Hand-eye coordination*
- *Fine motor development*
- *Gross motor development*
- *Language and vocabulary building*
- *Mathematical thinking*
- *Scientific thinking*
- *Literacy*
- *Social/emotional development*

With this in mind, I have collated a page long list of loose parts which we all can help find and accumulate for our centre. These may be lying around our home, at work, they may be at garage sales we pop into, and they may be in opshops, or found while out walking in the bush or the beach, etc.



There are, of course, three possible areas in which 'loose parts' have learning potential.

1. The art, collage, construction area: loose parts that are cheap, easily accessible, free and attractive and can be used in creations that might end up coming home.
2. The building, block, family play area: loose parts can foster imaginative, creative play, and where the loose parts may be photographed and documented but not taken home. We already have lovely wooden blocks and fabrics and wooden stands, that invite play, but we could supplement these with other 'stuff'... see items on the 'loose parts' list which are highlighted in yellow.
3. Outdoors. Again, these are played with and used and are not taken home and include things like sand, water, pipes, planks, tyres, rope and so on.

Here is a link to an absolutely stunning e-book put out by the generous 'Fairy Dust teaching' website. Which goes over the philosophy and practical applications of loose parts.

https://s3.amazonaws.com/fdt-freebies/Loose%2BParts%2BStart-Up%2BGuide.pdf?inf_contact_key=35399fe58fec2865b97a1b0905612e3816358d5485884e2f31e6019a0d26c8b0

Here is another link to another page of hers. <https://fairydustteaching.com/blog/> If you scroll down through numerous posts, you will find about six or seven specifically to do with loose parts. There are also some neat storage ideas.

Yours with considerable passion and enthusiasm, and very warm regards. Nga mihi nui.

The image below comes from <https://www.facebook.com/StimulatingLearningWithRachel/> a brilliant source of ideas regarding loose parts. She had a very full garage apparently!!

