

Helpful Tools and Loose Parts for Child-led Play

Adding these open-ended loose parts and real tools to your playground creates opportunities for sensory integration, heavy work and problem solving while connecting and having fun with friends!

Loose Parts for Building and Creating

Item

The Benefits (Click Image and/or Name for Link to Purchase)



Planks ([Click here for 4 ft](#)) ([Click here for 6 ft](#)) are a fantastic and multi-functional loose part for obstacle courses, forts and making balance boards. These planks have a slight ridge to them, so they provide more grip and stability for children when using them. We use 6ft planks and 4ft rough pine planks.



Milk Crates are perfect for building, obstacle courses, gathering, and transporting.



Ratchet Strapping with 's' hooks. 1 1/4" x 16 ft. Wonderful for making slacklines, monkey bars and swings. Plus, they are helpful when making forts. [Video Detailing How to Use.](#)



Burlap is great for fort making and dramatic play. Provides children with the feeling of privacy and seclusion, while providing easy supervision for adults.



Big "O" Tubes, along with wooden troughs, can be used to create ball runs. Ball runs can support STEM, problem solving and temporal awareness which helps children time and coordinate their physical movements.

Loose Parts for Manipulating Sensory Materials

These tools provide children with opportunities to cross at the mid-line supporting important connections between the left and right side of the brain.



Real Shovels for 'real' digging from TSC. Great for digging in the sand, dirt, mulch and mud



Garden Trowel from Home Depot - Perfect tool for all seasons. Good for digging in the garden and sand. A nice tool for supporting hand grasp.



Rakes from any local hardware store. Can be used in any season. Handle to be cut down to the children's height.



Push Brooms & Push Broom Handle: Using a broom to push mulch, leaves, or sand requires precise hand movements and grip strength, enhancing fine motor skills. **Detachable handle that can be cut to suit children's height.**

Loose Parts for Transporting Sensory Materials

These items will provide heavy work opportunities to support hand grasp, core strength, and balance. Heavy work will also connect the brain and body to become more organized, coordinated and regulated. (A. Hanscom, 2016)



Stainless Steel Bucket from Tractor Supply. This farm grade bucket will not bend under pressure or rust.



Good sturdy **Rubber Bucket** that will last a lifetime. This farm grade bucket will survive the thaw and freeze of winter temperatures.



Child-Size Wheelbarrow. A fun way to transport materials.

Tools for Your Mud Kitchen



Serving Spoons are excellent for manipulating sensory materials such as sand, mud, water, and more. Slotted serving spoons provide another element to their play.



Tablespoons are another item to be used for sensory manipulation. Allows for a smaller scoop and great for practicing fine motor skills.



Ladles are also another option for sensory play. They are great for sensory materials that are more liquid in nature.



Rubber Mallets supports hand grasp and hand eye coordination while interacting with sensory materials including chalk bits, discarded pumpkins and ice chunks.



Home Depot Buckets (2 Gallon): Can be used for sorting tools such as shovels, spoons, trowels, etc. Can teach children about organization and respect for the outdoor environment.



Muffin Tins can be used to sort smaller sensory materials and inspires dramatic play in children. Stainless steel is used instead of Teflon to prevent rusting when wet.



Loaf Pans can be an example of a container to scoop sensory materials into. Children will get creative and focused with sensory-rich activities!



Stainless Steel Bowls are great used for mixing water, dirt and any other sensory material.



Mortar & Pestles support hand grasp to grind and crush sensory material. This stainless steel one is a good option as it will not break or crack.

These mud kitchen supplies can be easily stacked and sorted for easy storage and set up.