

Loose parts

The Curiosity
Approach™

The beauty of loose parts
...open ended resources

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What are loose parts?

Loose parts are the opposite of toys. Toys are designed with specific purposes; loose parts are not. The concept of “loose parts” is understood by children worldwide; any child noticing odds and ends lying about will instinctively pick them up and put them to use. This is because children have active hands and active minds with a gift for seeing possibilities that adults miss.

In open-ended play children, themselves decide what to do, how to do it, and what to use. For children who immerse in it, open-ended play evolves in amazing ways. Initially, it consists of fluid experimentation. Over time it becomes increasingly purposeful as children start to plan what to act out or invent.

Loose parts can be small as corks or large as drain pipes – healthy imagination finds uses for them all!

Nicolson's Theory of Loose Parts

The term "loose parts" came into use in 1971, after an architect, Simon Nicolson, published a paper called "The Theory of Loose Parts".

Nicolson described loose parts as "variables" and provided examples such as materials and shapes; smells and other physical phenomena, such as electricity, magnetism, and gravity; media such as gases and fluids; sounds, music, motion; chemical interactions, cooking and fire; and other humans, and animals, plants, words, concepts and ideas. With all these things all children love to play, experiment, discover and invent and have fun.

When children play in a space or with an object they experience it in a unique way. Rather than its intended purpose, they may view it in terms of its 'affordances'. American psychologist James J. Gibson (1979) suggested that environments and objects within them have values and meanings that are unique to the person perceiving them. The 'affordances' of an object or space are all the things it has the potential to do or be. For example, a brick wall may be built to make a clear boundary between a pavement and a garden but for many children, it would offer a place to sit, walk along, balance, hide behind and jump off.



Teaching children how to think, not what to think.



Be curious

Young children are blessed with a natural curiosity for the world around them. They explore with all their senses, ask questions and observe. They look for connections and relationships between what they already know and what they are discovering for the first time.



Storage

Loose parts need to be easily accessible to young children, with a place where they belong.





Inspiration

The urge to play, investigate, discover and explore.



The more a toy does, the less a child does.

Where magic happens

"LOOSE PARTS... UNTIL USED BY THE CHILDREN 'PASSIVE'. ONCE COLLECTIVELY CREATED INTO SOMETHING THEY COME TO LIFE!

PASSIVE THINGS... ACTIVE IMAGINATIONS. THE CHILDREN ARE 100% IN CHARGE OF THEIR IMAGINATIONS. FAR BE IT FOR US TO EVEN BEGIN TO KNOW WHERE THEY ARE GOING IN THEIR IMAGINATIONS OR HOW THEY ARE GOING. THE WONDERFUL UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE OF PLAY IS WHAT CONNECTS CHILDREN AND WHEN LEFT TO THEIR OWN IMAGINATIONS MAGIC HAPPENS!"

Kimberly Crisp - Heart School



Schemas

When using loose parts children will have the opportunity to follow their own schematic learning style. Resources have no fixed outcome or use 'passive', and soon come to life in the hands of each individual child. Children are in charge of their own learning journey.

Active learning

When children are active, the synapses in their brains are fire up and they become motivated to keep on trying, to master new skills and to experience competence and mastery.

Children have a deeper interest in the activities they are involved in, working out problems, critical thinking and an urge to keep on trying. Loose parts have no fixed outcome - therefore the process of exploration, discovery, and engagement is where deep learning happens.



**“CREATIVE PEOPLE ARE CURIOUS, FLEXIBLE,
PERSISTENT AND INDEPENDENT WITH A TREMENDOUS
SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE AND A LOVE OF PLAY.”**

Henri Matisse

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Did you know that we are committed to the United Nations 17 Global Goals? We focus on Global Goal 4 – A Quality Education For All. We donate directly to Sparkle Malawi and sponsor numerous children to attend school!