

Examples of Loose Parts for Playgrounds

Natural	Manufactured	
Stumps	Tires	Hula hoops
Sand	Plastic drainage tubes (construction)	Ribbons
Gravel	Ropes	Milk crates/wooden boxes
Twigs	Buckets	Nets
Wood	Tea pots	Wooden planks
Straw bales (seasonally)	Child size garden tools	Old baking pans, large utensils
Driftwood	Fabric, rip stop nylon (shower curtains, not plastic)	Tarpaulins
Cornstalks (seasonally)	Baskets	Ribbon Wands
Seeds	Crates	Sacks (burlap)
Acorns	Boxes	Scarves
Stumps	Carabiners to use with ropes	Scoops
Logs	Rope	Pallets
Large wooden blocks	PVC tubes	Balls
Shells and		Buckets
Seedpods		
Medium size stones		
Bamboo		

Storage

You'll need easy to access storage as close to your main play areas as possible (or perhaps more than one unit if the grounds are large). Any doors, staff support or permission requirements between children and the resources will limit how often and how creatively they are used. *The more doors and barriers, the less effective your loose parts provision will be.* Ideally, the children will be able to operate this storage themselves. Everyone is responsible for helping tidy away, but it helps reduce the bottleneck at the doors (and with the organization of the internal space) if a group of student volunteers on a rota receive resources at the end of the play session and move them into the main unit.

Loose parts storage ideas:

- Carts (as used for PALs equipment)
- Outdoor deck storage boxes
- Small shed
- Outdoor garbage bins with lids (large)
- Shipping container (can be secured)
- Hang milk crates from a fence to hold loose parts (using 'S' hooks).



How do I . . . introduce loose materials into my playground?

Class-time exploration sessions are ideal for testing out the possibilities of different materials, building confidence among teaching and support staff and working out simple do's and don'ts. Create a playground promise or charter, that everyone signs up to and is displayed in poster form in classrooms and laminated outside (e.g. ropes are never used on people).

Make sure you involve playground support staff in class-time exploration sessions so that they can explore the resources, build confidence and start to think about how best to roll out loose parts at break and lunchtime (*for example through the use of a timetable, materials located in one area, every other day or at lunchtime only*).

Customized training for AVRSB school staff (including support staff) is available through your HSC Consultant in partnership with local recreation providers. For more information, contact the HSC Consultant (Erin.Todd@nshealth.ca).

How do we source loose parts materials?

Make a list of the kinds of bits and pieces you'd like to source – really let your imagination run free. Keep the materials non purpose-built. Include lots of variety, and things that have the potential to combine together in lots of different ways.

Then think about where you could source your materials – parents and the local community are a great source, for example, of milk crates, wood off-cuts, tires, old rugs and picnic blankets. This forms part of really effective interdisciplinary project work with strong links to curriculum areas such as literacy, numeracy and health and well-being.

Donated Materials Should be Organized in Advance

- Have temporary or final storage in place before you start receiving donations
- Make sure you say clearly what sorts of things you are looking for
- Make sure you also say what you don't want (e.g. toys, broken items)
- Set specific days and times for people to drop things off
- Have staff and children ready to receive, check and store materials ready for use on those days.

Loose parts available at break and lunchtime: the relationship between the environment and your loose parts is crucial.

Some schools start by containing loose parts play in a particular area. This means that:

- It's easily supervised while everyone gets used to it
- Numbers of children using it can be limited (it will be very popular at first)

- You can ensure it's positioned in a place that doesn't clash with other play interests such as running games or soccer.

Some schools allow children to take resources out at break and leave them out until after lunch. Others get resources out on a Monday and everything stays out until 'tidy Friday'.

What would work best for you? For example, how secure are your grounds out of school hours if resources are left out?

Plan to keep things going: play naturally comes in peaks and lulls, and materials will be used a lot then abandoned for a while. Build in time and set up a group to actively manage your loose parts resources (e.g. PALS student leaders).

You'll need to regularly review loose parts, and take care to re-purpose, recycle or throw out:

- Things that are broken or dangerous
- Things that haven't proved useful enough to justify their storage space.
- You should also regularly top up your loose parts: replacing lost or broken but popular things.
- Adding new things that you think might spark play again, and combine with what you already have in interesting ways.
- Communicate loose materials provision for play and curricular use widely through displays, schools websites, homework tasks and open play days.

Tips & Troubleshooting:

- Having enough resources and a wide variety of resources is key to loose parts success. If a particular kind of resource is highly sought after, make sure there are plenty.
- Some loose parts may pose a risk to school buildings: make sure you are aware of any wider managerial structures that you need to work with.
- Maintenance: include regular checking of loose parts to ensure that they are still fit for use on your maintenance plan.