



HELLO PARENTS,

Open-ended materials are items that can be used in many different ways with no specific directions. They can be carried, lined up, redesigned, taken apart and put back together in multiple ways. Some examples of open-ended materials are sand, water, blocks, play dough, paint, and things found in nature. Open-ended materials encourage free exploration, creativity and independent thinking. In this newsletter, we will provide activities that will motivate your child to experiment, explore, and solve problems using various open-ended materials.

ACTIVITIES

INFANTS (3 -18 MONTHS)

MUFFIN TIN FUN

MATERIALS:

- Blocks in different shapes, sizes and colours. Make sure they are small enough for your child to handle, but big enough to avoid a choking hazard.
- Muffin tin

DIRECTIONS:

- Have the materials ready and sit with your child on the floor.
- Invite your child to explore the blocks and muffin tin.
- Observe your child and notice the ways they are exploring. For example, they can tap them together, put the blocks into the muffin tin and dump them out, transfer blocks from one section of muffin tin to another, toss them, make sounds by dropping or banging, or try to stack the blocks.
- Add some other safe objects with interesting textures or shapes to your child's play.

[Click here](#) for more activities.

TODDLERS (19 MONTHS – 2.5 YEARS)

EXPLORE CONTAINERS

MATERIALS:

- Various containers with lids or caps.

DIRECTIONS:

- Provide your child with various containers and lids. Include one or two containers with the lids loosely on.
- Invite your child to play with the containers and lids.
- Allow your child enough time to explore the materials. They may try taking the lids off and putting them back on, testing which lid fits each container, stacking the containers in tower formations, pretending to eat or drink from them, or filling them with objects from around the house.
- Have your child use the same containers during bath time to add another dimension to their explorations.

[Click here](#) for more ideas.

PRESCHOOLERS (2.5 – 5 YEARS)

ICE WORLD

MATERIALS:

- Containers in different sizes and shapes. For example: yogurt containers, plastic cups and bowls, ice cube tray, etc.
- Plastic sea animals (any other animals are fine, too)
- A large tub
- Water
- Large measuring cup
- Blue food colouring (optional)

DIRECTIONS:

- Have your child help you fill the containers with water and put them in the freezer overnight.
- Next day, remove the ice from the containers and place them in a large tub.
- Add the plastic sea animals into the tub. As a variation, you can also freeze some of the animals in the ice.
- Invite your child to play with and explore the animals and ice.
- Using a large measuring cup, ask your child to pour water over the ice and observe what happens. You can add a few drops of blue food colouring into the water to create the blue ice effect.
- Join your child in their play and engage them in conversations about what is happening.

[Click here](#) for more open-ended sensory activities.

JK/SK (4 – 6 YEARS)

SHAPES IN NATURE

MATERIALS:

- Paper
- Pencil
- A collection of various natural open-ended materials. For example: rocks, sticks, leaves, feathers, etc.

DIRECTIONS:

- Discuss with your child what kinds of materials can be found in nature.
- Go for a walk with your child to collect the materials.
- Invite your child to explore the found materials. Ask them to describe their characteristics such as texture, shape, colour, etc.
- Choosing one item at a time, encourage your child to make a sketch of what they observed about it. For example: lines on the leaves, colours or shapes on the surface of rocks, the texture of tree bark, the shape of a stick, the spiral on a snail shell, etc.
- Encourage your child to use the materials to create designs or patterns.

[Click here](#) for more activities with natural materials.

SCHOOL-AGERS (6 – 12 YEARS)

STORY STONES

MATERIALS:

- Smooth stones
- Sharpie
- Paint
- Paint brush
- Camera (optional)

DIRECTIONS:

- Go out and collect stones.
- Use a sharpie to draw pictures on the stones. Some examples are: animals, vehicles, objects or people.
- If you want, use paint or coloured sharpies to add colour to your drawings.
- Choose one stone to start a story.
- Continue adding stones as you build your story.
- Once the whole sequence is complete, you can record it with a camera.
- Share your story with family or friends.
- Use the same stones to create different stories and keep taking photographs of each sequence to remember your stories.

[Click here](#) for more open-ended craft activities.



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A TIP FOR TODAY

- Designate an area in your house for easily accessible art supplies.
- Have a variety of open-ended materials available and easily accessible at home.
- Use clear containers to organize the materials and make clean-up easier for your child.
- Offer household and recyclable items like boxes, paper towel tubes, and kitchen utensils for creative play.
- Provide your child with old clothes, hats, scarves and shoes for dress-up dramatic play.
- Follow your child's lead in play and acknowledge their ideas.
- Ask open-ended questions that stimulate thinking and encourage more than simple, one-word answers.