

Recyclable Materials and Found Objects

Enhance your learning environment and curriculum and help take care of our world by collecting and using safe recyclable materials and found objects.

- Involve families in collecting items for the classroom.
- Send home a recycled paper sack with a list of items you need attached to it. Ask families to return the items in the sack.
- Contact local businesses for materials.
- Collect only those items you can store until you have a need for them.
- Check all items for safety and cleanliness.

Refer to Topics of Study in Adventures in Learning for activities that include many of the materials listed in this handout.

Items to Use for Environmental Print Activities

- Empty food packages: cereal boxes, cake, muffin, and cookie mix boxes, cracker and cookie boxes
- Labels from canned soups, fruits and vegetables
- Coupons with product labels or logos
- Restaurant and store logos
- Soda cartons

Environmental print – the print found in the natural environment of the child; including print on food containers and other kinds of product boxes, store and restaurant signs, road, street and traffic signs, logos of products we see every day. It is the first print a child recognizes as literacy skills begin to emerge.

Environmental Print Activities

Learning Goals:

SE1.2 Interacts with peers (*social skills*)

CD2.4 Holds and manipulates information in memory (*short-term and working memory*)

EL3.2 Shows knowledge of the shapes, names, and sounds of letters (*alphabet knowledge*)

Activity: Cereal Concentration (Memory)

- Create pairs of cereal logo cards from cereal boxes or coupons from the newspaper
- Place the cards face up and involve children in naming the cereals.
- Explain that they will have turns turning over two cards to try and find a match.
- Turn the cards face down so the print cannot be seen.
- Invite the first player to turn over two cards to see if they are a matching pair.
- Allow each child in the game a turn.
- When a matching pair is found, child gives the cards to you.
- Continue the game as long as children remain interested.

Remember that there are no winners or losers. Refer to the Learning Goals for the purposes of the game. Learning Goals tell us “why” we plan the activity.

Learning Goal:

PH2.1 Demonstrates fine motor strength, control, and coordination (*hand-eye coordination, grasp and manipulation*)

Activity: Cereal Puzzles

- Make cereal puzzles by cutting the fronts of various cereal boxes into 4 to 6 pieces.
- Store the pieces for individual puzzles into a self-closing clear plastic bag.
- Invite children to put the puzzles together.
- Consider sending the puzzles home for children to do with their families.

Learning Goals:

SE1.2 Interacts with peers (*social skills*)

EL2.1 Notices and manipulates the sounds of language (*rhyme*)

EL3.2 Shows knowledge of the shapes, names, and sounds of letters (*alphabet knowledge, letter-sound connections*)

Activity: I Went Shopping

- Place an assortment of environmental print found in grocery stores in a recycled paper grocery sack.
- Gather a small group of children. Recite the following rhyme:
“I went shopping, now I’m back.
What do think is in my sack?”
- Take one item at a time out of the sack, sweep your hand under the word(s) and ask a volunteer to read it.
- Call attention to the words, letters, and letter features.
- Help children make the connection to what they already know. For example, ask, “Charles, how is your name like Cherrios?” They begin the same. They both have an uppercase (capital) C and a lowercase h.
- Continue the activity until each child has a turn. Repeat the rhyme each time and invite children to join in.

Learning Goals:

EL3.2 Shows knowledge of the shapes, names, and sounds of letters (*alphabet knowledge*)

MT2.1 Uses classification and patterning skills (*classification*)

Activity: Sort and Classify Logos

- Provide a variety of logos for different food items such as crackers, cereals, sodas and candy.
- Invite children to sort and classify the logos into the different food categories.

Shredded Paper

- Create a sensory tub with shredded paper. If possible, include paper of different colors and textures. Hide objects such as animals and shells in the tub for children to discover.
- Mix shredded paper with pet store bedding and use for bedding for small classroom animals such as hamsters.
- Use shredded paper for Easter baskets (if your program celebrates Easter).
- Use brown shredded paper as mulch for planting activities in which children are involved.

Used Clothing and Items Related to People and Professions (Dramatic Play Center)

- Older boy's shirts in solid colors for different professions in the community: first responders (police, fire, emergency workers), checkers and baggers, medical personnel. Add badges or name tags to represent different professions.
- Large shirts with sleeves shortened or t-shirts for paint shirts
- Boy's size 10-12 sport coats
- Aprons, smocks with sleeves shortened
- Baby blankets to use as doll blankets
- Vests, scarves, gloves
- Dance costumes and shoes (spray shoes with disinfectant)
- Ties, wallets, purses, jewelry
- Mock credit cards from junk mail
- Brief cases
- Telephones
- Used hair dryer with electric cord cut off
- PVC pipe and connections
- Plastic vases and artificial flowers

Teacher Notes:

- *Clothing that is easy for children to put on and take off works best.*
- *Children's size 10-12 clothing works well.*
- *If adult clothing is used, shorten length of item and of sleeves for safety and ease for use by children.*

Items for Creative Art

- Scrap paper, including colored construction paper, recycled paper sacks
- Yarn, string
- Ribbon, lace, netting
- Fabric scraps of different textures, felt scraps
- Large buttons
- Greeting cards with personal information deleted
- Wallpaper samples (collages, rubbings from textured wallpaper)
- Pompons
- Paint chip samples
- Dried flowers
- Gift wrap
- Stickers
- Items for 3-D art
 - Cardboard or wood scraps, and tree cuttings for base
 - Items listed above
 - Core (from paper towel rolls, gift wrap rolls), mailing tubes
 - Small yogurt, butter, margarine, pudding cups and frozen dessert topping containers (washed thoroughly)
 - Items from nature: 6" tree cuttings, shells, rocks, feathers
 - spools

Boxes of all Sizes

- Cube-shaped tissue boxes
 - Carefully fill an empty cube-shaped tissue box with crumpled newspaper or shredded paper. Use several sheets of newspaper because this will make the cube more durable.
 - Cover the cube with self-stick paper.
 - Glue various pictures to the box; pictures related to a current topic of study such as Farm Animals. Glue pictures of 6 farm animals, one per side to the cube
 - Ask a child to toss the cube, name the animal and tell one thing about it.
 - Continue with each child having a turn to toss the cube.
- Large appliance boxes
 - Involve children in using large appliance boxes to create something related to the current topic of study such as Travel Safety and Taking Care of Vehicles.
 - Involve children in creating a vehicle from a large appliance box. Invite them to help you decide what type of vehicle it is and where to put the windows and doors.
 - Remove one of the long panels of the box. You cut out the windows and door. Cut the door, leaving one side attached to the box.
 - Involve children in selecting the colors of tempera paint to use.
 - Provide the paint and brushes and invite children to paint the vehicle
 - Add the vehicle to the block center or take it outdoors.
- Blocks from Boxes
 - Use boxes to create blocks to place in the Block Center.
 - Fill the boxes with crumpled newspaper. Use lots of newspaper because this will make the block more durable.
 - Cover the boxes with self-stick paper and laminate for durability
 - Add the blocks to the Block Center.
- Prop Boxes
 - Use large and sturdy cardboard boxes with lids for prop boxes.
 - Store props for each theme or topic of study in the box.
 - Label each box with the name of the theme or topic of study.
 - Tape an inventory list to the inside cover of the box.
 - Check prop boxes periodically and repair or replace items that are torn or broken.
 - Invite families to contribute recyclable items for the prop boxes.

Teacher Note:

- *Prop boxes include a variety of materials relevant to a particular theme or topic of study. As children use the items in the prop boxes, they are recreating and exploring the topic-related and life experiences they have had and gaining a better understanding of the world around them.*
- *Refer to Adventures in Learning Tips and Techniques, page 6, on the Better Beginnings website for information on Developing Prop Boxes.*

Miscellaneous Items

- Newspapers
- Magazines: for pictures and to place in Learning Centers (fashion and hair styling magazines for Dramatic Play, science related magazines for the Discovery Center, auto magazines for the Block Center)
- Envelopes
- Pictures that reflect real people of different races, cultures, ages, abilities, and gender in non-stereotypical roles

- Pictures of nature
- Menus
- Calendars
- Memo pads
- Address books
- Old blueprints
- Carpet squares
- Tree cookies (blocks or discs): a variety of sizes of cross cut sections of hardwood trees, including the bark.
- Fabric scraps of different textures (make texture boards and pictures, baskets of fabric scraps of different textures)