



# Unlocking the Learning

## M2.2 Loose Parts

**Loose parts in child care environments support physical growth, cognitive skills, and creativity, and enhance science and math concepts. They encourage active learning, critical thinking, collaboration, and relationships among children of diverse stages and interests. Loose parts are versatile, developmentally and age-inclusive, sustainable, and cost-effective, fitting seamlessly into various play environments. They empower children's unlimited creativity, prompting them to transform simple items into imaginative objects.**

### Types of Loose Parts

**Natural Materials:** Sticks, stones, tree cookies, shells, pinecones, straw, sand, and dirt.

**Reused and Recycled Materials:** Dowels, spools, wood scraps, napkin rings, tin cans, and cups.

**Plastic Pieces:** Milk caps, plastic cutlery, artificial flowers, hair curlers, curtain rings, beads, game pieces, milk crates, and PVC pipes.

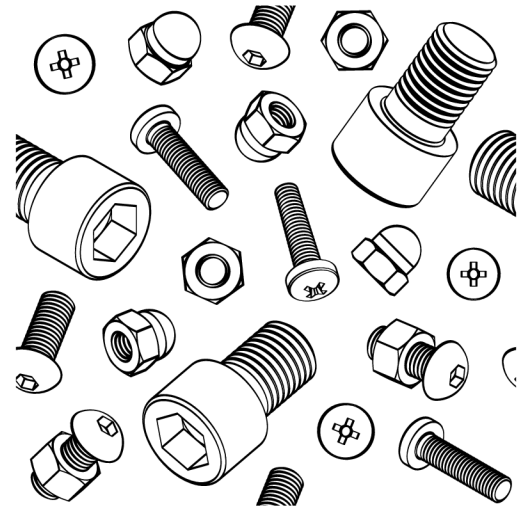
**Metal:** Nuts and bolts, washers, keys, hinges, spoons, and tubes.

**Ceramic/Glass Items:** Beads, doorknobs, gems, flowerpots, prisms, tiles, and mirror discs.

**Fabric and Yarn:** Wool, silk, burlap, ribbon, scarves, blankets, sheets, string, and lace.

**Packaging:** Tape, paper rolls, wrapping paper, cardboard scraps, bubble wrap, boxes, and egg cartons.

**Note:** Loose parts can extend beyond these categories to include items like logs, driftwood, tools, and everyday objects.



Loose parts are versatile and economical, making them ideal for home child care. Thrift stores, recycling, and community sources are great for obtaining them. Storage is critical, with clear, labelled containers for small parts and accessible shelving for larger items. PVC and cardboard tubes can be tied together and kept in a corner, while a tub of containers makes switching easy. Quick access and organization are essential in busy home child care settings.



**The role of the provider is to locate and gather the loose parts, then present them to children directly, or place them where they will be discovered. The next step is to step back and observe the children as they engage with the loose parts. Let them explore and create freely. Use your observations to guide you in planning for future play experiences.**