



TASTER PLAY SESSIONS

Organising some introductory play sessions can help children, parents and staff understand what loose parts play is all about.

Starting with a small group of children often works best.

In a school, involve a couple of classes or a mixed age group rather than the whole school until everyone builds confidence

Taster session aims	Introduce loose parts play to children, raise awareness across the school and build support for your project. These sessions are an opportunity to involve everyone in discussing practicalities and procedures for your setting.
Preparing to facilitate the taster sessions	<p>Work out in advance who will be part of the team facilitating the loose parts play and discuss your roles.</p> <p>Read through relevant sections of the Manual and Toolkit so you are familiar with loose parts play theory. In particular, read the pages on the adult role, observation, play cues and risk-benefit assessment.</p> <p>You could talk through a few 'what if' scenarios as relevant to your setting.</p> <p>For example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we do if two children want the same loose parts? • What do we do if they ask us to make something for them? • When would it be ok to ask them to stop doing something? • When would it be ok to get involved in the play?
What you need for a taster play session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group of children • A large enough selection of loose parts for the number of children playing • A place to play • Time - at least 30 minutes, longer is better • A willingness to give it a go and a good team to discuss with afterwards.

Introducing loose parts play with children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep it practical - have a selection of loose parts to hand and discuss with children what they could be • At the start of the session, discuss safety, let everyone know about the tidy up process and any signals you will be using. • Stay calm and have fun!
Facilitate a few sessions	<p>It is common and natural for children to be excited about the new resources initially, for play to be energetic and the resources tested. Almost all children settle into deeper play, given sufficient time. It's worth giving the taster sessions a bit of time before deciding what's working and what's not.</p> <p>You might want to wait until things have settled before inviting visitors such as parents or people you want to persuade of the benefits.</p>
Raise awareness of the sessions	Ensure everyone knows what loose parts are and why you are introducing loose parts play. This should link with your wider communication plans. Parents/carers should be informed and asked to ensure that their child has suitable clothing and footwear.
Ensure adults see children playing	Seeing children playing with loose parts and how play is facilitated, often brings about that all-important 'lightbulb' moment when people start to understand all the benefits and pleasure of loose parts. In schools, make sure all staff can be involved so that they can see what is happening and witness first-hand the benefits of free play with loose parts.
Have a debrief afterwards with children and adults	<p>Discuss what worked well and what needs to be adapted for future sessions. Allow time to listen to everyone's concerns and discuss solutions. This can be followed up with a further session to create an action plan.</p> <p>Taster sessions are an opportunity to involve children in discussing safety, roles and procedures for loose parts play in your setting.</p>

