

# TRUCE PLAY BOXES

## **Play Boxes: For Hours of Creative Play**

Play Boxes contain collections of small, familiar, inexpensive items that are organized around a



play theme and are presented in an appealing way. Playing with the everyday items in these boxes encourages children to ask questions, investigate, problem solve, and act out familiar scenes. Creative play develops valuable skills including creativity, communication, collaboration, and early academic skills.

Children are natural "scientists," exploring and learning about their world while involved in activities sometimes misunderstood as "just play."

Play Boxes are a great way to support children's creative play by

providing easily available, engaging activities and materials that don't involve screens.

#### Here's how to create Play Boxes for your child:

1. Find a sturdy cardboard box or a plastic bin.

2. Choose a theme and put a label on the box (including both a simple word and a picture of the theme). Decorate the box yourself or with your child, if you like.

3. Collect items for your box at home or purchase supplies at drug stores, hardware stores, stationery stores, arts and crafts stores, and/or grocery stores.

4. Put items in small containers, sandwich bags, or build dividers with pieces of cardboard to

make appropriate compartments in the box. Young children often like to organize play items by returning everything to its place.

5. Store the Play Boxes that your child has stopped using in an out-of-the-way place. Choose one to bring out again when your child is looking for something interesting to do. (This keeps the boxes fresh and engaging for your child). You might add one or two new items to the box before you bring it out again.

Ideas for **Play Boxes** inside!

6. Play Boxes are ideal for rainy days, sick days, play dates, when a child needs a break from screens or when "bored" and looking for something fun to do.





**Great Gifts, Too!** 

**Consider creating and** giving a TRUCE Play Box an alternative gift idea that children will love!

#### **Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment**

#### www.TruceTeachers.org

First Aid	Playdough
Children understand, control, and gain emotional comfort acting out real-world injuries, illness, and doctor visits.	Using playdough provides multiple benefits. While improving motor skills, children also develop imagination, the ability to represent objects, and even math skills related to
<ul> <li>Flashlight</li> <li>Band-aids</li> <li>Sling</li> <li>Ace bandages</li> <li>Eye patch</li> <li>Gauze</li> </ul>	comparing and changing size.
<ul> <li>Fabric strips/ bandages</li> <li>Surgical mask</li> </ul>	Buy a can of playdough (or make your own using the recipe below).
Water/Bathtub	<ul> <li>Plastic knife</li> <li>Garlic press</li> <li>Popsicle sticks</li> <li>Children's scissors</li> <li>Small tray</li> </ul>
Playing with water encourages curiosity, imagination, experimentation, eye-hand coordination, and communication. Children develop understanding of science concepts such as sink and float and math concepts such as empty and full.	<ul> <li>Wooden dowel</li> <li>Plastic lids</li> <li>Buttons and beads</li> <li>Plastic animals and people</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>Plastic tubing</li> <li>Rubber ducky</li> <li>Turkey baster</li> <li>Spray bottles</li> <li>Plastic funnel</li> <li>Plastic eye dropper</li> <li>Plastic nesting/</li> </ul>	Playdough Recipe 1 cup flour 1 T. oil 1 cup water 1/2 cup salt 2 t. cream of tartar
<ul> <li>Bucket</li> <li>Sponges</li> <li>Wash cloth</li> <li>Small doll for bathing</li> <li>Bubble bath</li> </ul>	Food coloring (baker's colors are more intense) Mix ingredients in saucepan. Cook over low heat stirring constantly until playdough pulls away from sides of pan. Scoop playdough onto wax paper, knead until smooth. Store in airtight container.
Office These materials are especially suited for playfully building interest in early literacy skills related to writing	
Play Box • Stapler • Hole pun • Tape	Highlighters
<ul> <li>Post-it no</li> <li>Clipboard</li> <li>Scissors</li> </ul>	I see a second
sealed Cide alla	

- Ink pad and stamp
- Spiral notebook
- Index cards

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Pencils

• Pens • Markers

### **Active Outdoor Play**

Playing outside allows children time and opportunity to build motor skills, such as strength, balance, and coordination. Children can explore cause-and-effect with various natural materials and make natural discoveries about the physical world.

- Jump rope
- Balls
- Bean bags
- Frisbee
- Sidewalk chalk
- Sidewalk paint
- Cones
- Whistle

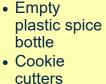
- Stopwatch
- Bubbles
- Spray bottles
- Bucket with brushes (use water to "paint" rocks. fence. sidewalk, sides of buildings, etc.)



### Cooking

Imaginative cooking play gives children freedom to mimic adult activities that may be dangerous in a real kitchen. As they play, children are also counting, measuring, developing fine motor skills, building vocabulary, cooperating, and communicating.

- Small mixing bowls
- Measuring cups
- Measuring spoons
- Rolling pin
- Small whisk
- Wooden spoon
- Spatula



Recipes

notebook for child's original recipes. as dictated to

an adult

Apron

Spiral

Children's

cookbook

Chef's hat

### **Sensory Fun**



Playing with materials of various textures provides chances to pay attention to touch, smell, sight, and sound. Sensory play supports language growth, development

of fine motor skills, problem solving, reasoning, and social interaction.

- Hypoallergenic, unscented shaving cream
- Plastic tray
- Food coloring
- Popsicle sticks, clean combs, plastic fork, paint brush

Adult sprays shaving cream on tray, adding food coloring. Children sculpt, smooth, draw, and write. This can also be done in a bathtub.

#### Nature

Exploring nature can be a great way to practice counting, sorting, and classifying. By comparing the many treasures found in nature, children begin making discoveries about the life cycles and how plants and animals grow and change.

- Magnifying glass
- Binoculars
- Nature guides with pictures of birds, trees, animals
- Small sketch book or clipboard and colored pencils
- Vest or small back-

- pack with pockets
- Small ziploc bags or plastic jars for collecting things
- Bag of bird seed



#### Baby

Imaginative play can provide a powerful emotional outlet for children as they act out their realities, boosting their selfregulation skills. By giving feelings to a baby doll, children practice identifying emotions and reading social cues.

- Baby doll or stuffed animal
- Newborn disposable diapers
- Bib
- Empty baby food jars
- Baby spoon
- Baby bottle
- Infant or doll clothes



- Burp cloth
- Baby blanket
- Baby pillow
- Pacifier
- Rattle

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# **Please copy** and distribute this guide no other

permission

needed.

watering can

or cars (tiles, carpet pieces, sandpaper)

Small cars and trucks

with markers

Paper towel and

tubes together)

toilet paper tubes

Masking tape (to tape)

• Board or piece of stiff

Various textures to

cardboard (for ramps)

etc.

• Vinyl sheet, paper, or fabric to draw roads

Boxes of various sizes for buildings, bridges,

Balls & Ramps

As they play, children learn about the physical world, including speed, friction, and weight.

add to ramps to affect speed of balls Marbles

Little cars

Small

and

als

balls of

all sizes

materi-

### Gardening

Gardening provides many learning opportunities, from sorting and counting seeds to discovering how plants grow and how to care for them.

- Plastic flower pots
- Potting soil Seed
- packets Shovel
- Small rake
- Small
- Spray bottle
- Garden
- Gardening

- used for signs, bridges, stoplights, etc. Construction paper.
- markers, and tape

Toilet paper rolls to be

Collage As children explore collage materials, they are developing creativity and problem-solving, as well as eve-hand coordination and fine motor skills.

- Roll of paper
- Construction paper
- Children's glue, glue sticks
- Tape
- Stickers
- Recycled gift wrap and pieces of ribbon
- Fabric scraps

- Pipe cleaners Googly
- eyes Cotton
- balls Buttons
- Beans
- Colored pasta
- Leaves, pine cones, pebbles, shells, other natural materials

Pencil

Paper

#### Numbers

In playing with these materials, children can identify numerals, count, estimate, measure, problem solve, and make up games.

Measuring

spoons

Objects to

tape, cups,

count (such

as buttons,

shells, etc.)

- Dice
- Playing
  - cards
- Bingo cards Coins
- Calculator
- Calendar

TRUCE (Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment) is a national group of educators deeply concerned about how today's children's media entertainment and toys are affecting the play, learning, and behavior of young children.

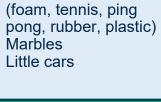
For more information and to find other TRUCE publications, including our "Seasonal Family Play Plans" and "TRUCE Guide for Using Children's Books to Promote Play," visit www.truceteachers.org, find us on Facebook at TRUCE Teachers, or contact us at truce@truceteachers.org.











- Popsicle sticks
  - tools
- gloves

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Children's Entertainment