

Making the Most of Sand Play

Children have always been interested in sand play. They dig in sand, sift it, build with it, pour it, enjoy the feel and smell of it, pretend with it, and explore how it moves.



Why Play in Sand?

There is no right way to use sand. It invites participation; it stretches the imagination; it provides a soothing sensory experience; and it is an excellent avenue for children to learn physical, cognitive, and social skills.



Because sand play is open-ended, the child determines the direction and path of his or her own play. This freedom then clears the way for the child to build developmental concepts.

Open-ended play can be fostered by using key phrases like the following:

- * How could you change/fix that?
- * What else could you do?
- * What would happen if you...?
- * What do you think/feel about...?
- * How did you do that?
- * Is there another way to...?

By asking open-ended questions, the parent allows the children to learn more than they could on their own..

What Can Children Learn From Playing in Sand?

Sand play promotes physical development. Large muscle skills develop as children dig, pour, sift, scoop, and clean up spills with brush and dustpan. Eye-hand coordination and small muscle control improve as children learn to manipulate sand accessories. They learn math, science and social skills as well.

There are also many accessories that you can use to change the sand play area to keep it fresh and inviting. Look around for common objects, you might even decide to make alternative rice, nut, corn, bean, mulch, packing peanut, aquarium gravel, or cornmeal to compare with sand play.

Some ideas for Sand Play Accessories

cardboard tubes
ping-pong balls
spice containers
net bags from onions or citrus
fruit
aquarium nets
large marbles
balance scale
feathers
corrugated cardboard
baking bowls
pans
small pitchers
soup ladles
mixing bowls
spatulas
rolling pins
funnels
sieves
colanders
stones
shells
scoops
measuring spoons and cups
aquarium gravel
gardening tools and gloves
sprinkling cans
plastic flowers and vases
wooden spoons
buckets
jewels
shakers
zoo or farm animals
table blocks
pipes, tubes, cylinders
pine cones
nuts
jars and lids
clothespins
counters
potato mashers
block people
magnifiers
magnets
dishes from housekeeping center
rubber puzzle pieces
marbles
sand combs
filters
cloth scraps
vehicles
berry containers
model railroad accessories-tunnels,
trees, people