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## Ngā tākaro rāwekeweke, kete taonga tairongo hoki | Loose parts and sensory treasure baskets

Loose parts and sensory treasure baskets are safe everyday objects for infants, toddlers and young children to explore. Loose parts and treasure baskets enable open-ended play with no right and wrong way of doing things.

### Links to *Te Whāriki*

Loose parts and sensory treasure baskets support tamariki to explore, be curious, and use their imagination. They are strongly associated with the learning outcomes in the **Exploration | Mana aotūroa** Strand of *Te Whāriki*.



Te Tāhuhu o  
te Mātauranga  
Ministry of Education



Te Poutāhū  
Curriculum Centre

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## Loose parts can help tamariki by:

- › use their senses to explore objects — the — smell, texture, sound, taste, weight, how they balance, fall, fit together
- › take an interest, focus and pay attention
- › tinker, imagine, invent, and experiment
- › explore mathematical concepts by sorting, classifying, counting, measuring, sequencing, and to reason and problem-solve
- › build language and name and describe objects and experiences and support their conversations and storytelling.

## Adults can support tamariki by:

- › allowing them to explore on their own at their own pace and ability (ā tōna wā, i tōna taumata)
- › using rich and descriptive language with tamariki (e.g. heavy, cold, fluffy, Mōhanihani)
- › letting them try out their own ideas and make decisions
- › helping them practise their social skills and problem-solving
- › ensuring the environment is safe, e.g. items cannot be swallowed, materials are not toxic, avoid sharp, breakable objects
- › putting loose parts where tamariki can see them and reach them
- › setting up spaces for using loose parts such as trays, whāriki or rugs
- › putting out enough loose parts to capture children's attention, and to minimise conflict, but not so many that it becomes overwhelming or overstimulating.

## Ideas for a sensory treasure basket

You might like to make a treasure basket of real world items with lots of different textures and materials. Babies, toddlers, and young children will often play and learn using the same things in different ways. Some items will be safer or more interesting for babies or for older children. Always take care to select safe and suitable materials for young children that they will not choke or hurt themselves on.

Everyday items around your home are simple to find, and inexpensive. It's great to repurpose things like boxes, tubes, and containers. Op-shops are another great place to find interesting items. Some ideas for items you could add:

- › Soft items such as a velvet scrunchie, a makeup brush or pom poms.
- › Items of different weights, temperatures, and textures such as jam jar lids, ornamental spoons, metal tins, wooden spoons, curtain rings, silicone bakeware.
- › Items from nature such as smooth shells, driftwood, pumice, harakeke balls, loofahs, and coconut shells.
- › Interesting items that spark curiosity such as solid bangles, an egg timer, a book, or small ornaments.
- › Things to carry, hide or put things in such as an old purse, kete, ice cream containers, chocolate boxes, formula scoops, pots and pans, cups, a paper bag, or empty tissue boxes.