

Practice Ideas

Small World Play

You only have to watch young children at play to realise their fascination and engagement with small world play. It can take many forms and include the most random objects and materials that never fail to absorb and engage. From small worlds that they tinker with to small spaces that they create for themselves they are a rich resource for creativity, imagination, and enjoyment. Think back to how you played outdoors and to the things you gathered to create the small worlds of your childhood. In this leaflet we introduce a few examples and ideas for supporting this type of play. Whether your outside space is large, small, limited, or non-existent there are small world ideas here for you.



Natural materials such as soil, stone, twigs, shells, weeds, plants make wonderful inexpensive play materials. Look at the image here and see how a few stones, sticks, and two shells create a home for the little figurines. The adult role is to ensure the materials are appropriate to the age and dispositions of the children using them.

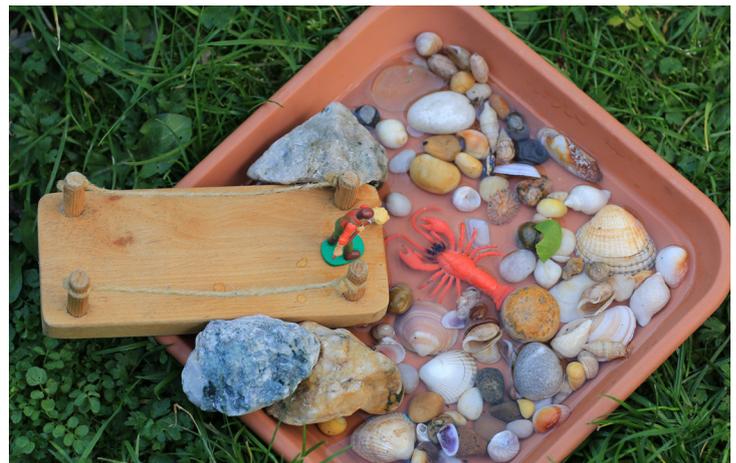
Most children are automatically drawn to natural materials and intrinsically recognise their play value. Some children however may never have played with these materials in this way before and may need a little support to become engaged in this type of play.



Above you can see how a small flower container with some weeds and stones becomes a jungle or a Zoo when some animals are added. Add another container and piece of wood, or cardboard tube and more play scenarios emerge.



Even the smallest amount of water can completely transform and enhance children's play. Here we see how a little water has enabled a sea world to be constructed.





A walk in the woods collecting sticks or even saving the sticks after trimming trees or hedges will give you plentiful supply of sticks that come in handy for all sorts of play.

Bits and pieces found around the home or play space what we call loose parts can be used in very imaginative ways by young children as they create their small

play worlds. Small world figures and animals are very versatile play props as they can be used in an infinite number of play scenarios.



If outside space is not easily available small world play can be very suited to limited space indoors. Here we see how a collection of petals, stones and shells bring the outdoors in as they are turned into a fascinating and engaging play material. Shapes, animals and petal people are designed and created. The multi sensorial, aesthetic, creative and imaginative benefits of such materials are easily recognised and appreciated.



Follow this link for some short videos on play ideas: <https://first5.gov.ie/parents/preschool-at-home>

These sites have lots of small world play ideas:
<https://www.facebook.com/letchildrenplay/>
www.naturallycreative.net

