



## Manipulative play

When children participate in manipulative play they are developing control of their bodies, especially the smaller muscles of hand, finger, arm, and eye.

They practise making decisions, choosing their own materials, and setting and solving their own problems. Newly learnt skills are reinforced and perfected, and as they take responsibility for their own learning they gain in confidence and self esteem.

Experience with manipulative resources provides children with opportunities to develop pre-mathematical skills.

### **Some ways for adults to support children's learning**

Set aside a special area with a wide range of resources for manipulative play, including natural resources

Support children to try things and solve problems for themselves as much as possible

Encourage children to use trial and error, as well as previous experience to solve problems

Support children by talking to them about what they are doing and using language which will extend children's thinking and understanding.

Manipulative play refers to activities where children move, order, turn, or screw items to make them fit. It allows children to take control of their world by mastering the objects provided. It is often solitary but when sufficient resources are provided can also be an important cooperative activity.

Remember that for the safety of children under three, all pieces should be too big to fit in a film canister.

### **Manipulative play helps children to:**

Learn about concepts of size, shape, weight, length, and height

Gain knowledge about sequence, conservation, comparison, order, patterning, identifying, colour, and texture

Develop coordination and control of eye, arm, hand, and finger muscles

### **Setting up the manipulative play area**

Manipulative play is easy to set up and can happen indoors or out. The floor or verandah, or a protected spot outdoors, is ideal. A carpet square will give warmth and comfort. Provide a range of equipment and resources in clearly labelled storage containers. Encourage children to bring items from home, e.g. cotton reels or buttons, and use group excursions to gather shells, stones, etc.

### **Manipulative play resource equipment**

Threading materials – beads, cotton reels, natural materials

Screwing materials – nuts, bolts, small plastic jars with lids

A range of items for sorting, matching and classifying for colour, shape, size, etc.

Nesting and stacking toys

Posting boxes

Interlocking sets such as Mega Blocks and Duplo.

### **Children may enjoy sorting and matching:**

Buttons, pegs, shells, leaves, seeds, bottle tops, feathers, nuts, bolts, screws, stones, driftwood, flowers, etc. All natural materials should be non-poisonous.

### **Adults can help**

Provide a range of manipulative equipment and resources

Talk to children about what they are doing, and encourage discussion

Keep the area and the resources tidy and orderly.

