

Early Childhood Development  
Programme Division  
UNICEF New York

# ECD KIT HANDBOOK FOR CAREGIVERS



For every child  
Health, Education, Equality, Protection  
ADVANCE HUMANITY



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## **Editing**

The document was copyedited by Carole Campbell.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### ***OVERVIEW OF ECD TRAINING MATERIALS***

These guidelines are part of a training package intended to explain necessary skills to and develop them in coordinators, facilitators, and caregivers for ECD programming in emergencies and in transition contexts. Prior to distributing the ECD Kit, facilitators are expected to provide orientation training to caregivers for safe and effective use of the kit, including how to put in practice the present guidelines. Caregivers, particularly if they did not receive orientation, should use the ECD Kit guidelines.

### ***GOAL, OBJECTIVES, AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE GUIDELINES***

The guidelines are designed to instruct caregivers in the safe and effective use of the ECD Kit. They provide essential information on the purpose and content of the kit; on using the kit to create safe learning and play environments for young children; the guidelines also suggest developmental, age-appropriate children's activities. These suggestions can be useful for caregivers for organizing activities centered on listening, talking, creative play, and activities that promote children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and mental development.

## **THE ECD EMERGENCY KIT**

### ***WHAT IT IS***

The ECD Kit is a package containing early-learning, play, and psychosocial<sup>1</sup> materials that address the developmental progress of children from birth to age six. The kit can serve a group of approximately 50 children at one time. Most of the kit materials can be used for many years and those materials that need replacement can be ordered on line. The kit has been made as gender and culturally neutral as possible (no items are attributed to boys or girls exclusively, and all are widely accepted). The kit is complementary to the "School in a Box" and the "Recreation Kit." It can be used in a rapid education response but is in no way intended to replace formal school. Some nonemergency countries may order the ECD Kit if local toys are not obtainable or do not exist.

### ***WHY IT IS NEEDED IN EMERGENCIES***

Children have the right to life and assistance in their development under any circumstances—everywhere and at all times.<sup>2</sup> Young children's survival, well-being, and development are dependent on and built around close relationships and strong emotional attachments to their parents or other caregivers. Play, which is essential for children's learning and growth, should be the daily "work" of children. Play fosters learning, growth, and development. In emergencies, young children experience strong emotional reactions; they are less able to face uncertainty and adversity and have fewer internal coping resources than adults. Emergencies harmfully affect their health, physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development. Therefore, it is crucial to establish a safe environment where young children can interact with others and caregivers, feel secure, play, and have access to early learning and psychosocial development activities, with opportunities to express their feelings, to develop skills, and to establish and foster social relationships. Children with disabilities and special health care needs must have the same access to play activities and play materials as other children.

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1. The ECD Kit was developed in collaboration with UNICEF Early Childhood Development Unit and UNICEF Child Protection Section; the kit works to integrate both ECD and psychosocial components for the mental development and well-being of young children who are in emergency situations.

2. See Article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): 6-1: *Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life*; 6-2: *Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child*.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE KIT**

The ECD Kit provides opportunities for young children to play, learn, and develop during emergencies and thereafter.

The explicit objectives of the kit are to:

- Establish positive and supportive adult-child interactions;
- Create a safe and secure play and learning environment;
- Foster self-esteem and confidence;
- Develop critical early-learning skills;
- Interact with children of the same or different ages; and
- Create opportunities to develop curiosity, creativity, and self-expression.

## **WHAT THE KIT CONTAINS**

The ECD kit contains one copy of handbook for caregivers and play/learning materials for groups of approximately 50 children from birth to six years and two sets of activity sheets for children 0-3 and 3-6 years.

### **Materials for caregivers**

The ECD Kit has items (e.g., adhesive tape, pen, pencils and markers, plastic bags, exercise books) specifically for caregivers to use in the preparation and organization of the activities with children. These are to be used by the children and stored in the plastic bags by the caregiver. The caregiver can use the exercise books to keep attendance records or to record notes on each child's behavior and development.

### **Materials for groups of very young children and older groups of children**

The ECD Kit contains materials for children 0–3 and 3–6 years old. More specifically, the ECD Kit contains materials for the language, social, emotional, cognitive, and motor development of young children. Some items, e.g., jigsaw puzzles, come in more than one version.

### **Materials to create safe environment**

The ECD Kit contains basic items for making the environment sanitary: bar of soap and a collapsible water container. The soap should be used to wash children's (and caregiver's) hands before eating and after toilet use.

### **Additional material**

The ECD Kit contains blue UNICEF T-shirts and UNICEF decal (stickers) for quick identification and recognition of UNICEF-supported caregivers and their materials.

**ECD KIT PHYSICAL MATERIAL CONTENT**

<b>Item #</b>	<b>S/N</b>	<b>Item Description</b>	<b>Packaging</b>	<b>Quant.</b>	<b>Caregiver</b>	<b>0 to 3</b>	<b>3 to 6</b>
1	S5001010	Lockable Metal Box for Storage	Unit	1	*		
2		Combination Padlock	Unit	2	*		
3		ECD Kit Handbook for Caregivers	Unit	1	*		
4		Activity Sheets 2 Sets (0-3 and 3-6)	Unit	1	*		
5	S8794210	UNICEF T-shirt, cyan blue, cotton, L	Unit	2	*		
6	S8760025	UNICEF Decal, round, diameter 205mm	Unit	2	*		
7	S2687003	Tape, adhesive, transp Box-20	Box	1	*		
8	S4460007	Pen, Ball-point, Black/Box-10	Box	1	*		
9	S4552001	Pencil Sharpener, plastic/BAG-20	Bag	1	*		
10	S4325497	Markers, flipchart, colours, tip-4.5mm/PAC-4	Pack	2	*		
11	S0552000	Soap, toilet, bar, wrapped	Unit	5	*		
12	S5001006	Bag, carrier A4, interlock seal/PAC-20	Pack	1	*		
13	S4410021	Book, exercise, A4, ruled 96 pgs/PAC-10	Pack	2	*		
14	S5007310	Water Container, collapsible, 10l, 1.8m	Unit	5	*		
15	S1993545	Board Transport Book, children's age 0-3	Unit	1		*	
16	S25211020	Board Puzzle, wood, 4 pcs, age 0-3	Unit	1		*	
17	S2521060	Chain puzzle, wood, coloured, 6 pieces	Unit	1		*	
18	S2684006	Pencil, colouring, metal box, BOX/12	Box	3		*	*
19	S4520110	Eraser, soft, for pencil/Box-20	Box	2		*	*
20	S2584000	Crayon, wax, ass. Colours, BOX/8	Box	10		*	*
21	S2512020	Dominos, coloured, SET/28	Box	1		*	*
22	S202802	Ball, sponge'foam, app.10cm diam. Net/5	Net	1		*	*
23	S2512015	Shape-sorter, plastic, approx.12 pcs	Pack	1		*	*
24	S2512025	Stack and Sort Kit, approx. 16 pieces	Unit	1		*	*
25	S2657311	Paper pad, 50 sheets, A3/Pack of 10	Pack	2		*	*
26	S2657207	Paper pad, 50 sheets, coloured, A4/Pack of 10	Pack	1			
27	S2657208	Paper roll, approx 70 cm wide, 25 m long	Unit	1		*	*
28	S2587010	Beads, wood, app. 35mm diam. BOX/50	Box	1		*	*
29	S2584010	Crayon, wax,Jumbo, ass. Colours, BOX/8	Box	6		*	*
30	S2535010	Puppet, hand, children's size, SET/6	Set	1		*	*
31	S2535015	Puppet, hand, adult's size, SET/6	Set	1		*	*
32	S4460701	Pencil, HB grade, black/ BOX-10	Box	3			*
33	S2593010	Construction blocks, nat/col. w/bag. Set/50	Set	1			*
34	S2608500	Clay, modelling, assorted colour/BOX-6/8	Box	5			*
35	S2555010	Scissors, safety, school, B/B, 135MM/BOX-10	Box	1			*
36	S4432000	Glue, classroom use, paste/Bot-170ml	Bot	1			*
37	S2521010	Puzzle blocks, wood/plastic, Set/16	Set	1			*
38	S2521040	Circular Puzzle, wood, coloured, 20 pieces	Set	1			*
39	S2521030	Jigsaw Puzzle Set-12 pieces	Set	2			*
40	S2511000	Memory game, wood, Set/32	Set	1			*

## **HOW TO CREATE AN EARLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

In emergencies, the well-being of young children depends on effective and structured support that includes care, attention to attachment, and adherence, as much as possible, to a routine.

### ***HOW CHILDREN LEARN, WHAT TO EXPECT***

**The newborn** is eager to explore the world with the senses. Looking at the child, talking and singing to the child, face-to-face interaction with the child, and cuddling the child help him/her come alive to and engage with the world. Newborns learn by listening, coping, imitating, interacting, and exploring.

**The first year of life** centers on play through movement, listening to and making sounds, mimicking adults' facial expressions and gestures, and manipulating objects. Caregivers, simple items to hold, touch, taste, and explore are favorites.

**One- and two-year-olds** like to sort things and try movement tasks like rolling a ball over and over. They still love to play with caregivers, and they like playing next to other children and imitating them. Talking and listening to young children are important in daily care and play.

**Three-to-four-year olds** love to make up stories and use props to act them out with other children or to hear stories told or read by an older child or adult. They begin to ask questions about the world around them, love to draw, sing, dance, and play with different materials that they can manipulate. All these activities are better for them than formally structured learning.

**Five-to-six-year olds** can begin structured learning: reading, writing, and number skills. The foundation of their learning, however, still needs to be play through activities that allow them to explore and discover, thus preserving the love of learning and maximize cognitive development.

### ***ORGANIZING CHILDREN IN DIFFERENT GROUPS***

Play spaces should be designed to serve all children at the same time—provide space for several different activities so that a small number of children engage in each activity during playtime. In times of crisis especially, routine and participation in familiar activities are essential. Organize children into large groups, small groups, pair groups—make sure to make time for individual activities as well. Using age/stage of development to group children is one common way to form groups. Whenever possible, have the children engage in different culturally appropriate activities or traditional, familiar games. Homemade toys and local songs and dances are also resources. Caregivers should also plan for whole-group activities and individual activities matched to each child's developmental level. Again, wherever possible, caregivers should have children participate in organizing activities. For example, children can help in preparing or distributing kit materials, building groups or teams, setting up the learning environment, etc. Older children may also help younger ones. Involve families and other adults wherever feasible.

### ***CREATING SAFE PLAY ENVIRONMENTS***

Caregivers should make sure the environment is safe for infants, offering them areas for free exploration. Remove glass jars and other breakable items, put cleaning and other toxic fluids out of reach, cover electric wires and outlets (or tape them up), cover hard edges and corners of furniture. The caregiver should sweep the floor and make sure there are no small objects around, and that all medicines or toxic materials are out of children's reach. When possible, an outdoor play space should be available with ample room for climbing, running, swings, etc.; it should also have shade and water for drinking. All climbing equipment should be sturdy, with space for running. When outdoors, all children should be supervised. The caregiver should make sure that all children can be seen and not hidden by shrubbery; etc. The caregiver should make sure that play spaces are close to available medical facilities or plan regular visits by medical personnel. Ideally, caregivers should receive basic first aid training.

## **CREATING A DAILY SCHEDULE**

Try to create a program for a few hours a day that has:

- Time for routines (to eat, rest, wash, toilet)
- Time for transition from one activity to another
- Time for free play
- Time for group activities
- Opportunities for both indoor and outdoor activities

## **CHECKLIST FOR SAFE AND SECURE ENVIRONMENT**

- Location should be easily accessible and should have secured exits in case of urgent evacuation.
- If possible, the location should have reliable telecommunications equipment; caregivers should have use of this equipment at all times.
- If possible, location should receive a minimum of 50 children. The child-adult ratio should be broken down by age group according to local standards and practices. Obviously, newborns and younger children need more supervision than six-year-olds. For example, one caregiver for 5 children (from two months to one year); one caregiver for 10 children (from one to two years); one caregiver for 15 children (from three to four years); one caregiver for 25 children (from five to six years).
- Children should be supervised and not exposed to dangerous animals, traffic, machines, etc. When appropriate/possible, location should have an adequate fence so that animals cannot enter and children cannot come or go unnoticed.
- Location must be hygienic and protected (e.g., the ground must be free of dangerous objects such as glass, debris, etc).
- Location must be easily identifiable by parents and/or children's relatives.
- When using tents, any tent pegs visible above the ground must be covered.
- Location must provide easy access to sanitation facilities.
- Drinkable water must be available for children at all times. Sick children must have access to a personal cup for drinking; children should be able to wash their hands at any time.
- Location should be protected from rain, sand, windstorms, and direct sun.
- Location must offer acceptable temperatures. If needed, heaters or fans must be available.
- If cooked food is provided, cooking area should be situated away from the children.
- Fire extinguishers should be available and regularly maintained.
- If appropriate, a lockable first aid box dedicated to children must be available with a person trained and responsible for it.

## **ECD KIT STORAGE AND MAINTENANCE**

### ***HOW AND WHERE THE ECD KIT CAN BE STORED***

The ECD Kit's companion materials often inspire feelings of ownership in children. This offers a perfect opportunity for adults to teach children that care must be taken with valued belongings. Children can be taught how to store their companion materials properly in a place selected by you inside the ECD Lockable Metal Box. This prevents materials from being lost, stolen, or damaged. In addition, storage may prevent falls and keep younger children away from materials intended for older ones. Other good options for storing and organizing the ECD Kit materials are large, stackable plastic bins, smooth-edged baskets or sturdy, open shelves.



### ***ECD KIT MAINTENANCE AND REFILL***

Play materials must be properly maintained to ensure safe play as well as long use. Some of the kits contents, once used, may have to be replaced (i.e., modeling clay, crayons, glue, construction paper, paper pads, adhesive tape, soaps, notebook, T-shirts). To protect the kit and make it last longer, choose a caregiver and train him or her to handle it responsibly.

Do not refill the kit with culturally inappropriate materials. As much as possible, first look for locally available and culturally appropriate materials. If materials are replaced locally, make sure they meet universal standards for safe use. For example, the glue stick and the modeling clay should be nontoxic and labeled; the size of blocks should be 5 centimeters (2 inches) minimum, etc. When possible, local production of the ECD Kit or equivalent materials is encouraged; such production may greatly affect local employment, social activities and youth involvement (adolescents or parents could possibly be involved in production). As much as possible, promote durable and quality materials and plan for replacement of materials as they are used.

### ***RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOOD MAINTENANCE OF KIT MATERIALS***

- Remind children to let you know when materials need repair.
- Check ECD Kit companion materials at least every three months to determine if they are still in good condition and safe to use. Check ECD Kit materials regularly for cracks, tears, sharp edges, small parts, dirt, etc.
- Make any repairs immediately or throw away damaged play/stimulation materials.
- Discard anything damaged beyond repair.
- Never allow materials to remain outdoors overnight. Rain, snow, high temperatures, and dew can cause rust.

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### Photographs and illustrations

Cover: Chad Refugee Camp, Young Children in a Child Friendly Space, Arnaud Conchon  
Illustrations: David Warner (1999). *Disabled Village Children*. A guide for community health workers, The Hesperian Foundation

## **ANNEX 1: STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT**

*This Statement of Commitment is a framework only. Caregivers are encouraged to offer their own Statement of Commitment based upon what they believe to be contextually, culturally, and socially acceptable in their local environment. This exercise may be conducted during their induction training prior to the implementation of the ECD Kit.*

**Provide** appropriate safe, secure, hygienic, and healthy environment for young children, make sure that equipment and material used are safe. Adults should also be role models, demonstrating safe and healthy behavior at all times and making every effort to protect children from harm.

**Develop** and maintain a safe and supportive environment for children and families, providing care and sensitive emotional support to young children. Encourage and reward children for good behavior; never use physical or humiliating punishment.

**Ensure** children's access to the full range of available services and support; be aware of other services—refer children and their families to them if necessary. Inform relatives if a child becomes unwell or is injured; be familiar with emergency procedures for evacuation.

**Recognize** and build upon strengths and abilities of children and their families. Incorporate community participation from the start and in the day-to-day operations. Involve parents and families in planning and implementing activities whenever possible, Encourage children's participation in decision making as appropriate to their age.

**Consider** long-term impact and promote sustainability. Make every effort to promote stable and ongoing relationships with young children.

**Promote** inclusive and nondiscriminatory approaches. Ensure that activities are appropriate to age, sex, and background of children, taking into account religion, ethnicity, and culture.

**Respect** and recognize the varied individual needs and capacities of children. Pay special attention to involving and responding to the needs and capacities of marginalized or excluded children.

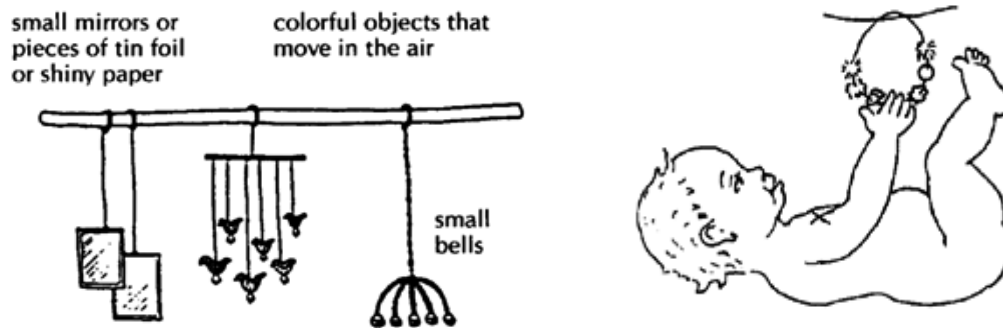
**Promote** social interaction and positive relationships among children and between children and adults.

## ANNEX 2: EASY- TO- MAKE MATERIALS

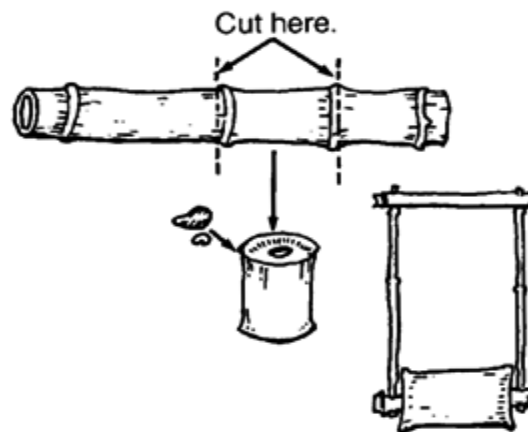
### MATERIALS TO ENCOURAGE LOOKING, HANDLING AND LISTENING

#### Hanging toys, 0–3 years

- Hang rings of beads and colorful objects, which can whirl above a child's bed or swing within the range of eyesight.
- CAUTION: Make sure the infant cannot catch and put any small objects into her/his mouth. Make sure not to use things that are poisonous, harmful, or that might get stuck in the child's throat, nose, or ears.



#### Bamboo push-a-long, for 0–3 years



### Gourd rattle for 0–3 years

- Find a small gourd,
- Cut a round hole at the stem and clean out the seeds and flesh. Let it dry out well.
- Put 2 or 3 small rocks or other objects inside.

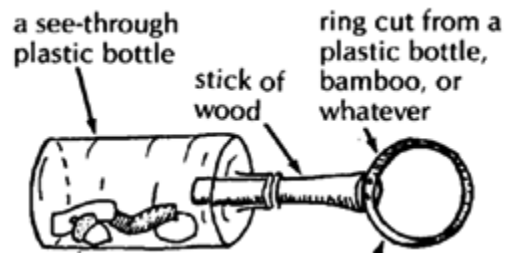


- Find a stick the size of the hole and glue stick to gourd.
- To make it stronger and better looking, mix white glue and sawdust, fill in the hole, sand smooth after glue dries.
- Paint it in bright colors.

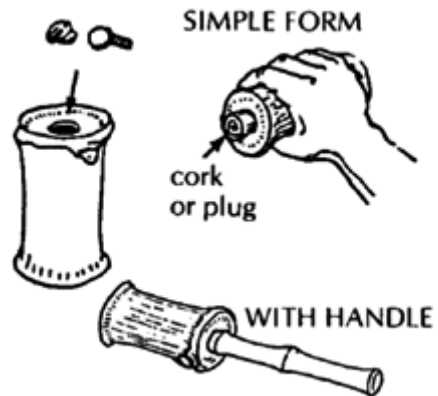


### Plastic bottle rattle for 0–3 years

- Take a plastic bottle or equivalent receptacle.
- Insert nuts, stones, colorful strips cut from other plastic bottles.
- Insert wood stick in the bottle as shown below.
- Wrap a ring with strips or cloth.



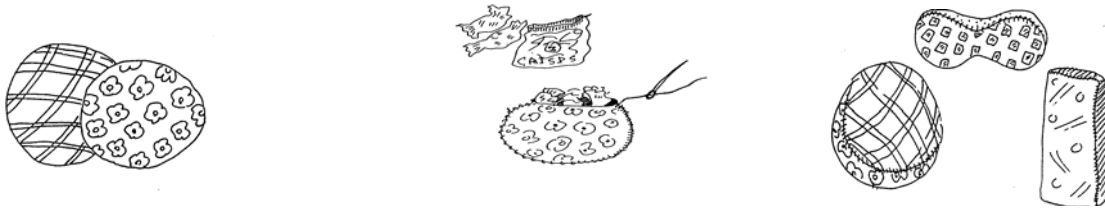
### Bamboo rattle for 0–3 years



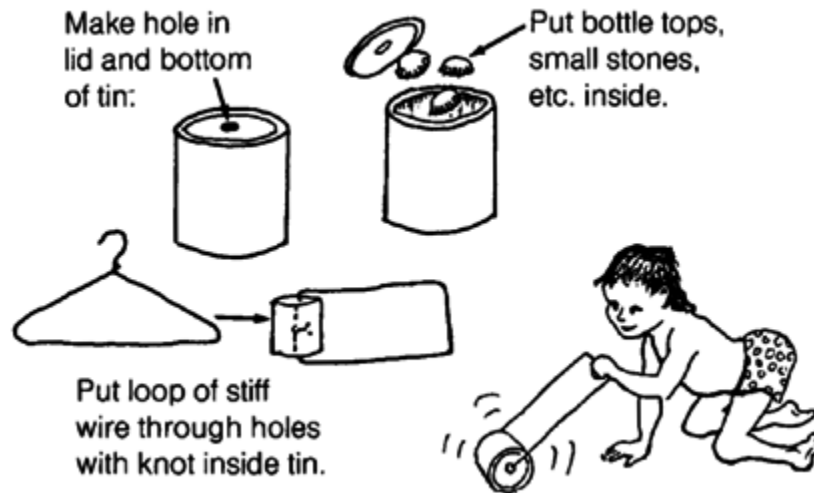
## Squeeze Toy for 0–3 years

- Trace and enlarge various patterns on a fabric.
- Cut out two pieces for each pattern.
- Sew the edges and stuff with wool, beans, or candy wrappers.
- Sew the ends.

Note: You can also cut out the figure of a doll and stuff it.

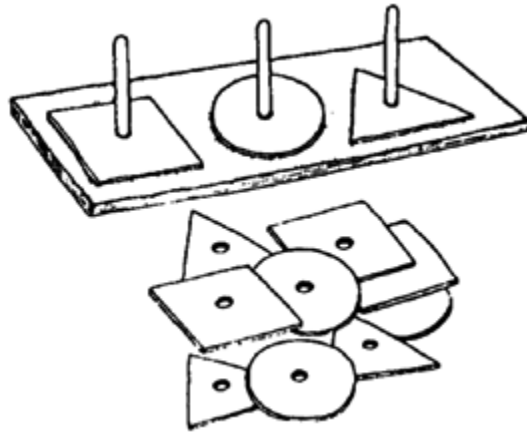


## Push-a-long noise toy for 0–3 years

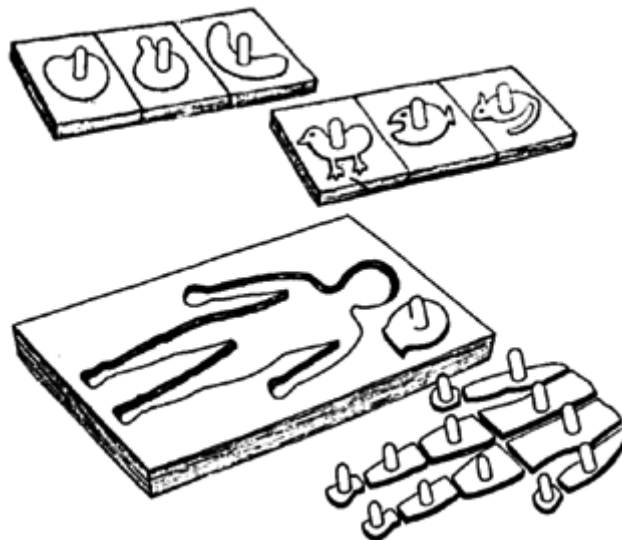


**MATERIALS TO LEARN ABOUT MATCHING COLORS, SHAPES, AND SIZES**

**Shapes on pegs for 0–3 years**



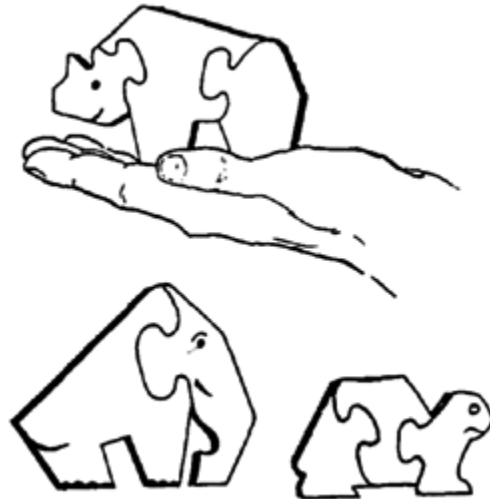
**Figures with pegs for easy gripping for 0–3 years**





### Puzzles for 0–3 years

- Puzzles can help a child learn how shapes, forms, and colors fit together.
- Puzzles can be made by gluing a picture on **cardboard, wood, plywood**, or other material.
- Cut out the pieces with a coping saw.



### Picture puzzle for 3–6 years

- On a piece of cardboard, paste or draw a picture.
- Varnish and allow to dry.
- With the safety school scissors, cut it into pieces (make sure the pieces are big enough).
- Have a child put the pieces together to form the picture.



## **MATERIALS TO DEVELOP USE OF HANDS AND SENSE OF TOUCH**

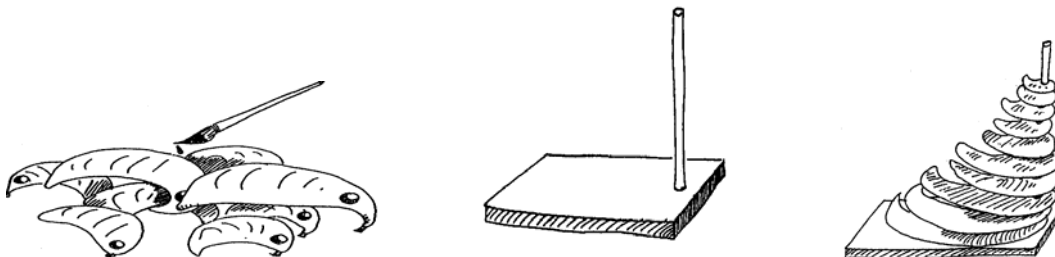
### **Box blocks for 1–3 years**

- Collect several empty milk and juice containers.
- Open the tops.
- Cut the edges and fill with crumpled newspaper.
- Tape securely.



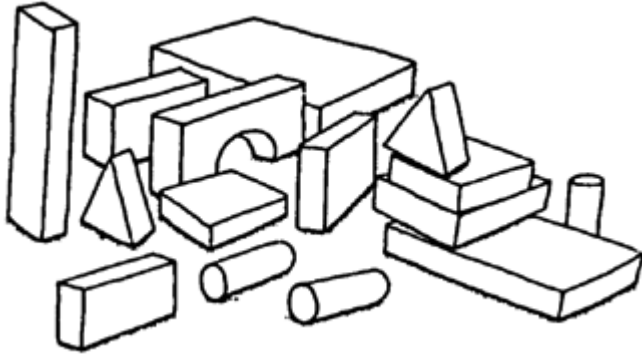
### **Seed stacking for 1–3 years**

- Get a wide piece of timber and a stick (the stick should not be sharp or thin).
- Glue the stick on the board.
- Collect 5 to 10 seeds of different lengths and sizes.
- Poke a hole in one end of each seed.
- Color each differently.
- Have children stack in any way they wish.



### **Building blocks for 3–6 years**

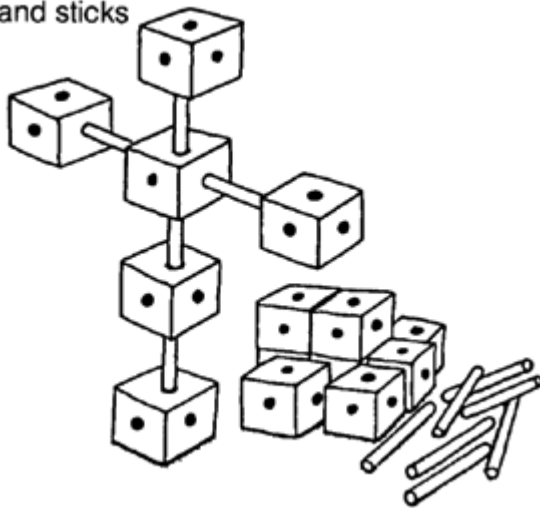
(made of wood, clay, or layers of cardboard)



### **Building blocks and sticks for 3–6 years**

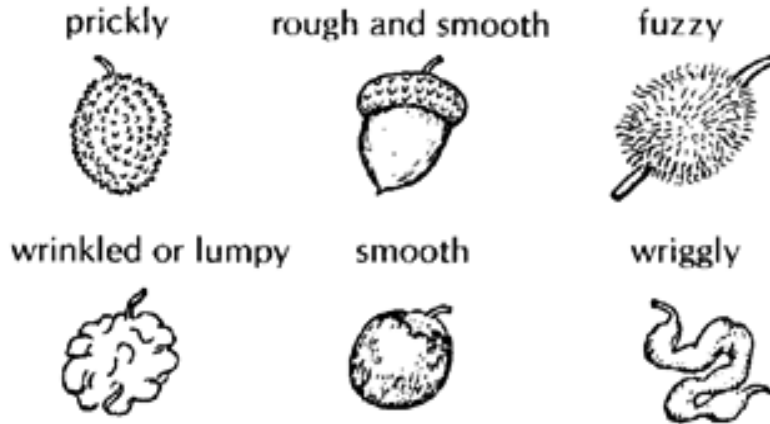
When accessible, dried sugar cane pieces and twigs are durable and may be used as shown in the illustration below.

**cubes and sticks**



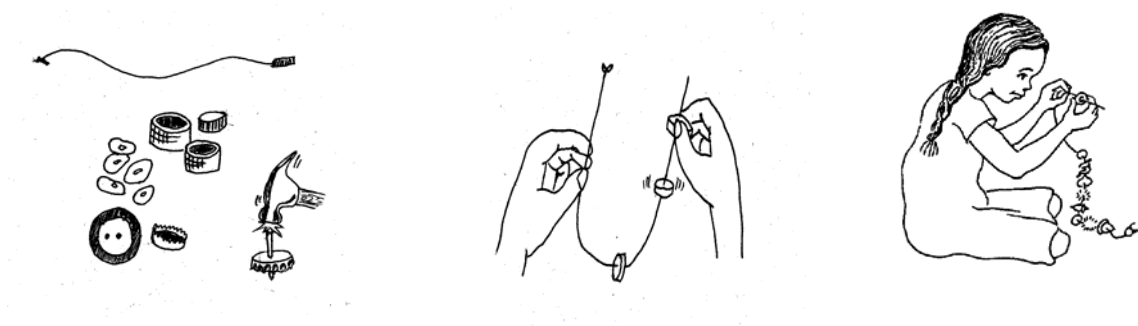
## Beads and chains for 3–6 years

- You can make beads and chains out of wild fruits and nuts.
- Once a child develops more hand control, he/she can begin to make chains and necklaces by stringing the nuts on a cord.



## Object threading for 3–6 years

- Use a few strings, fishing line, or a thin, pliable wire (not too long).
- Tie one end and tape the other end.
- Collect several objects like seeds, bottle tops, corncoobs, buttons, bones, etc. Make sure the objects are big enough not to be swallowed.
- Make holes in the objects that need it.
- Have a child thread the object.



## MATERIALS TO STIMULATE CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION

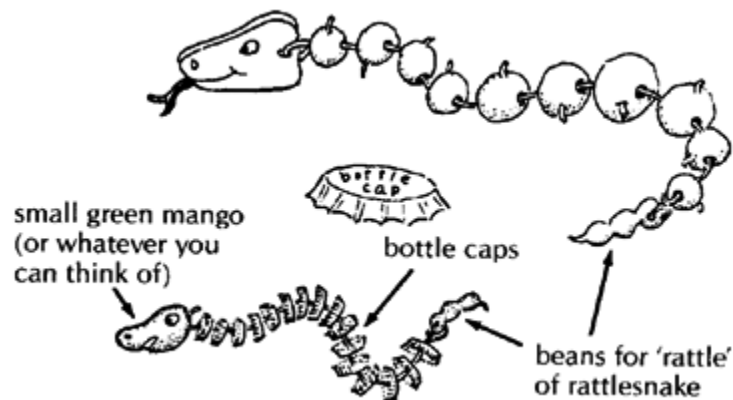
### Hand puppets and stuffed dolls for 0–6 years

- Trace and enlarge the pattern below on a fabric.
- Cut out two pieces of the pattern.
- On one piece, draw a face with a marker or use buttons or seeds for eyes (make sure all pieces are securely attached to the puppet).
- Sew the two pieces together, leaving the bottom open, so that you can insert your hand.

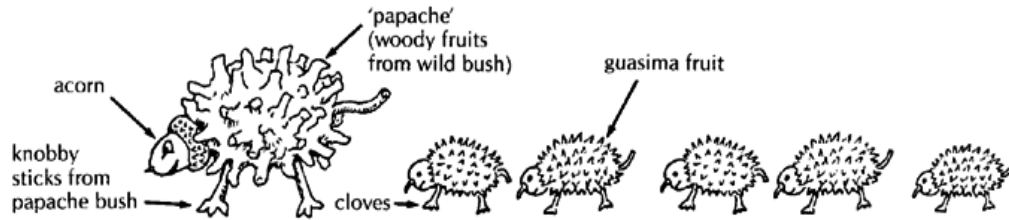


### Snakes for 3–6 years

- Stringing nuts, caps of acorns, bottle caps, or any combination of things.



## Hedgehogs, for 3–6 years



If you use your imagination, you and your children can have fun making all kinds of toy animals.

## Musical instruments for 0–6 years

