

Makeover Minutes

Quick tips for your learning environment



DIY Ideas on a Budget

Do-it-yourself (DIY) materials are a commonly used strategy in early learning environments. The inherent budget constraints, changing needs, and wear-and-tear present in most early learning environments make DIY projects a fun and effective way to broaden children's access to materials. DIY materials can also help you design activities with children's learning goals in mind.



Watch Video:
[DIY Ideas on a Budget](#)

Environmental Tips

Repurpose, recycle, and reuse



When lesson plans call for a list of materials, first see what you have. For items that are still needed, try to find a similar substitute instead of purchasing something new. Ask volunteers to bring in materials. Examples:

- Food packaging can be added to the dramatic play area. Children love playing with actual foods they eat at home.
- Ice cube trays can be used for a variety of sorting and counting activities.
- Fabric scraps can be used for sensory play, collage art projects, and to create a felt board.



Include DIY in a variety of areas

A learning environment usually consists of a variety of experiences for children. DIY activities are unlimited and can be incorporated in many areas. See photos shown on this tip sheet for examples.

Keep safety in mind

DIY goods can sometimes present safety hazards. Check carefully to minimize hazards when creating materials. Also, when creating DIY materials, keep in mind the ages and abilities of children in the group.

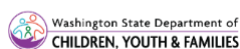
DIY safety checklist

- Lids are tightly secured
- Edges are not sharp
- Long strings are not accessible to infants and toddlers
- Materials are checked regularly for safety
- Small pieces are removed, and a choke tube is used to test for choking hazards

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Add letters to rocks to create a literacy activity. (Rocks should be large enough sizes so that they do not present choking hazards.)



Egg cartons, large pom-poms, and paper dice can be used to create a counting and sorting game.



Kitchen items can be repurposed for an outdoor music activity that allows children to explore different sounds.



Materials with a variety of textures can be used to create a sensory station that is safe for all ages.



Pegboards, nuts, bolts, and rubber bands can be used to create geo-boards. (These should not be used with infants and toddlers, due to the small pieces of hardware.)



Inexpensive baskets can be repurposed for a gross motor activity. Check frequently for any edges that may become cracked or sharp.



Pipe cleaners can be cut into small pieces and placed in a plastic bottle to create a STEAM activity using magnets. Make sure lids are tightly secured.

Additional Resources

Visit the [Meaningful Makeover](#) website for full episodes and more great tips!

References

Harms, T., Cryer, D., Clifford, R. M., & Yazejian, N. (2019). Family child care environment rating scale, third edition (FCCERS-3). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

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