

Trash or Treasure: 7 Things You Throw Away that Build Fine Motor Skills and Speech and Language



Fine Motor Skills:

- **Egg Carton –**
 1. Place one object in each section or have older children use the carton to sort objects.
 2. Cut each section apart and cut a hole in the middle; use a shoe lace or pip cleaner to string.
 3. Cut each section apart and stack on top of one another.
 4. Paint the carton!
- **Tissue Box –**
 1. Save a couple of CLEAN tissues. Practice pulling them out, then put back in and repeat!
 2. Place objects in the opening slot.
 3. Color or paint the box!

Speech & Language:

- **Shampoo Bottle –**
 1. Word/Concepts to target: push, pump, squirt, squeeze.
 2. Phrases to target: “watch out,” “all wet,” “all gone.”
 3. Everyday activities: washing hair (let your child use the empty one to clean dolly or Elmo).
 4. Other activities:
 - a. Fill bottle up with water and squeeze the water out to dissolve bath bubbles.
 - b. Squeeze or pump water into cups of various sizes and watch how long they take to fill.
 - c. Water the lawn or plants with your shampoo bottle.
- **Berry Basket –**
 1. Word/Concepts to target: open/close, in/out, eat, more.
 2. Phrases to target: “open up,” “no go,” “need help,” “no more.”
 3. Everyday activities: have your child place Cheerios in the basket; give your child a basket and spoon in their high chair as you prepare dinner for a little extra fine motor practice.
 4. Other activities:
 - a. Add eyes and a tongue to the basket and encourage your child to “feed” the creature.
 - b. Push items thru the small openings.

Fine Motor Skills and Speech & Language:

- **Empty Toilet/Paper Towel Roll –**
 1. Word/Concepts to target: through, long/short, around, where, please.
 2. Phrases to target: “where go,” “here it comes,” “wow fast.”
 3. Activities to try:
 - a. Cut them into rings and place them on a stick in the ground or on a wooden spoon.

- b. String a shoe lace through multiple rolls.
 - c. Cut the roll lengthwise, flatten it out and scribble/draw on it.
 - d. Push a ball or roll a toy car through the tube.
 - e. Play 'I SPY' as you look at all the fun things in your house or outside the window.
- **Empty Cereal Box –**
 1. Word/Concepts to target: Yikes, Wow, Thank you, Help!
 2. Phrases to target: “put it in,” “where did it go?” “want it out,” “come back.”
 3. Everyday activities: Help your little one pour cereal into their bowl.
 4. Activities to Do:
 - a. Have a tea party; play house and serve breakfast.
 - b. Cut a slit in one side of the box to insert envelopes, cards or letters like a mailbox.
 - c. Cut the picture on the box into pieces to create a puzzle your child can put together.
 - d. Stack multiple boxes like blocks.
 - e. Cut holes throughout the box and put cereal pieces or pom balls into the holes.
 - f. Cut the box open and paint or color on the inside... or even the outside!
 - **Empty jug or jar –**
 1. Words/Concepts to target: uh oh, in/out, drop, dump, oops, bummer.
 2. Phrases to target: “Oh no!”
 3. Everyday activities: have your toddler practice opening and closing lids.
 4. Other activities:
 - a. Drop clothespins, cereal, money or other items into the container.
 - b. Shake the container and make noise.
 - c. Blow on the top to make a horn.
 - d. Color and paint the outside of the container!

REMEMBER: YOU ARE YOUR CHILD’S BEST TOY!!! How you smile, laugh and engage with your child is very important during these activities. Social engagement and caregiver responsiveness are prerequisites to learning speech and language.

NOTE: The great thing about using garbage for play is you’re not out any money if the toy gets broken in the process, and it’s usually easily replaced.

Now, we’re not suggesting you should hoard garbage, but have some fun along the way. Promote the recycling craze! Reduce, Recycle, Reuse... and have fun!!