Toys and Resources to Start Your Playgroup

When starting a playgroup, it is important to have a range of toys, equipment and resources that support children's learning, development and sense of belonging. Playgroup NSW provides a basic starter kit of toys when a new playgroup is established; however, most groups will benefit from sourcing additional items over time.

Sourcing Toys and Resources

There are many low-cost and community-based ways to build your playgroup resources, including:

- Asking family, friends and local community members to donate good-quality toys
- Looking for bargains at garage sales, op shops and online marketplaces
- Seeking donations from local businesses, services or community organisations
- Holding small fundraising activities such as raffles, chocolate drives or community fundraisers

When accepting donated toys, ensure items are clean, safe, age-appropriate and in good working condition.

Play-Based Resource Ideas

Playgroups usually offer a flexible mix of indoor and outdoor play. Having resources across a variety of play areas helps create an engaging environment that supports children's social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.

Suggested play areas and resources include:

- **Quiet area:** books, puzzles, sensory toys, cushions or a small tent
- **Music and movement:** ribbon sticks, shakers, drums and other simple musical instruments
- **Creative arts:** crayons, pencils, paper, collage materials and washable paints
- **Imaginative play:** dress-ups, dolls, puppets, toy kitchens, pretend food and home corner items
- **Physical play:** balls, ride-on toys, bikes, tunnels, parachute, balance beams and climbing resources

- **Sensory play:** playdough, water play, bubbles, sand trays and textured materials
- **Construction play:** building blocks, LEGO, train sets, toy cars, cardboard boxes, magnetic tiles, paper cups and loose parts

Setting Up a Welcoming Space

In addition to toys, playgroups need practical and comfort-based resources that help make the space feel calm, welcoming and family-friendly. This encourages children to explore confidently and helps families feel comfortable attending.

Useful setup items include:

- Tables and chairs, including child-sized options where available
- Two to four rugs or mats for children to play on
- Baskets or tubs to display and organise toys
- Cushions and soft furnishings for quiet play areas
- Plastic plates, cups and basic morning tea supplies
- Coffee and tea making facilities, including a kettle and keep-safe cups
- Food preparation utensils
- Messy play shirts or old clothes for painting, craft and sensory play
- Storage containers to keep resources organised and protected between sessions

Key Considerations

When choosing toys and equipment, focus on resources that are safe, durable, inclusive and easy to clean. It is better to begin with a small range of high-quality, open-ended resources than to have too many toys available at once. Rotating toys each week can help keep playgroup sessions fresh and engaging while making setup easier for volunteers.

A successful playgroup does not need expensive equipment. With thoughtful planning, community support and a welcoming setup, your playgroup can provide children and families with rich play opportunities from the very beginning.

For more information please contact Playgroup NSW on 1800 171 882 or admin@playgroupnsw.org.au