



7. Elements for Open-Ended Play

Open-Ended Play allows children to express themselves in play freely and creatively, not bound by preset limitations.¹

Active Learning Ingredients:

- Choice – The child chooses what to do
- Materials – There are ample materials that children can use in a variety of ways
- Manipulation – The child can manipulate objects freely
- Language – The child describes what he/she is doing while they are doing it
- Support – Adults and peers encourage the child's problem solving and creativity

Facilitate Active Learning in the library space:

- Small, well defined niches and nooks
- Cluster objects together to create schema or themes
- Place books in the immediate area of play activities
- Create cozy areas for families to sit and read
- Create spaces that allow for children to engage in dramatic and constructive play

A few basic features that enhance Active Learning:

- Area Rug to Define the Play Space
- Bins, bin units, shelves to organize learning toys
- Bookcase for thematic books
- Puppet Theatre for themed puppets
- Magnetic Board for changeable magnetic activities
- Child height table and chairs
- Seating for adults and children

“Library Friendly Toys”:

- Do not have too many pieces
- Are not a choking hazards and have no batteries
- Are not too loud- consider the noise factor for your location
- Are open-ended for multiple developmental levels, interests, and promote creativity
- Are a combination of toys on a theme and/or concepts (color, number, shapes, ABC)
- Are gender neutral
- Reflect community culture (food, dress-ups, etc.)

¹ Frost, Joe L., Pei-San Brown, John A. Sutterby, Candra D. Thornton. The Developmental Benefits of Playgrounds. Olney, MD: Association for Childhood Education International, 2004. p.149.