

The Treasure Basket

What is a Treasure Basket?

A Treasure Basket is a low-sided basket or box filled with natural and everyday items which babies can explore by themselves. They can have lots of fun investigating the different items which helps them expand their thinking. Babies enjoy playing with treasure baskets from when they are able to sit up onwards. The Treasure Basket can be used indoors and outdoors.

Supporting babies' exploration and thinking

Using the Treasure Basket gives babies the opportunity to explore with all their senses. They can feel, taste, hear, smell and see a variety of textures, experiment and make choices. It provides early experience of sorting and classifying items. It develops fine motor skills. It helps babies develop concentration.

Preparing the Treasure Basket



- Choose a low-sided, stable wicker basket (10 to 13 cm). While a wicker basket is best as it enhances the sensory experience, a low-sided, stable cardboard box can also be used.

- Fill it to the very top with a large selection of items (see page 2). The number of items will depend on the size of the basket, but it could be 30-40 items.
- Ensure a variety of textures with minimal use of plastic.
- Ensure all items are large enough not to be a choking hazard.
- Make sure all items are clean.
- Add new items often, removing items that don't appear to engage the babies at this time and adding items you think might attract their attention.

Using the Treasure Basket



- Place the basket in an area free of distractions.
- Sit close to the babies; watch and observe, letting them lead.
- Interact when they look for this. Allow them to make their own choices about what to explore and how to do this.
- Use the Treasure Basket every day or at least several times a week, to enhance babies' opportunities to explore.

Items in a Treasure Basket can engage babies for a long time, up to an hour. They can be very discriminating about what items they want to explore and in the period they are using the Treasure Basket, they might only explore a few. You will quickly learn what types of items grab their attention. This will give you useful information on their interests which you can use to plan other experiences for them.

Items that can be included in the Treasure Basket

Gather a selection of objects with a variety of textures. Ensure objects are clean and safe for babies to explore. Check the objects frequently. The table below gives lots of ideas for what you might include in your Treasure Basket.



Natural objects	Natural material objects	Metal objects	Wooden objects	Paper and card	Other suitable items
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lemon Apple Large avocado stones Large pebbles or stones Shells Loofah Natural sponge Big feathers Fir cones Large chestnuts Corks Bamboo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small baskets Selection of brushes, for example, shaving, cosmetic, paint, nail, tooth and shoe brushes Woven mats Woolen ball Cane bag handles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tin lids Closed tins with items inside Chains of various types, for example, key ring chain Brass curtain rings Bunch of keys Selection of spoons Tea strainer Costume jewellery Small egg whisk Bells Whistles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juicer Clothes pegs Curtain rings Napkin rings Small wooden spoon Wooden spools Wooden beads on string Cubes and blocks Small bowl Small spatula Castanets Pastry brush Egg cup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small box Kitchen paper rolls Small wire bound notebook Greaseproof paper squares Small sheets of tinfoil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leather purse Shower 'puffs' Exfoliating mitt Bottle brush Plastic cylinders Velcro hair rollers Lengths of ribbon Pieces of fabric Puppy toy rubber 'bone' Small leather phone pouch or spectacles case Large perfume bottle stopper Bath plug and chain Small teddy bear Bean bag Herb bags, for example, lavender, rosemary

Consider having themed baskets, for example, with fruit, fabric or kitchen items. Look at websites to find more ideas and suggestions.