

# Prop Box Magic

Prop boxes are a way of setting the stage for Meaningful, purposeful play through exploring different experiences. Prop boxes will give children a variety of experiences in language, literacy, math and science, art, social and emotional play.

Children spend long hours in early childhood programs. Prop boxes are a way to help assure that the classroom environments are a living learning environment. Young children's understanding and learning happens as they explore and investigate new roles, prop boxes are a great way for children to do that.

Prop boxes need to compliment themes and be rotated as the themes change.

## **How to prepare a Prop Box**

- Find alike size boxes. (office storage boxes or plastic tubes)
- Search attics, basements, thrift stores, garage sales, friends, family and the children's parents are all great places to find your prop box theme related materials.
- Use real items when possible. Real items are always better than toys.
- Include literacy materials in every prop box. (Menus, books, maps, blueprints, writing pads, order pads, writing utensils, key boards, old type writers, are just some examples.) Children need to have many opportunities to incorporate reading and writing in their play.
- Include numeracy materials in every prop box. (Calculators, registers, play money, pricing, rulers, tape measures, scales are just some examples.)
- Have children help with ideas and items. Encourage the children to make items for the prop boxes.
- Ask local business for donations of items that will help the learning of children. Local businesses are always willing to help when it comes to children's education.
- Include activity binders
- Always remember to design your prop boxes to include all areas of the classroom environment.

Remember when preparing a child's environment it will lead way to powerful, meaningful play. A prepared environment is also a powerful influence on children's behavior.

When children are at play they need to have at least 30 minutes of uninterrupted amount of time for play. This will give children enough time to get into meaningful play that will spark children's imagination and promote role play.

Wonderful prop boxes will enable children to acquire information and learning concepts through meaningful hands on activities.

## **Prop Box Magic**

Theme related ideas for your next prop box

### **Astronaut Box**

Helmets (buckets or milk jugs w/ cut out), Space Ship (Large Box), Backpacks, Flag, Soda Containers (for oxygen tanks), Galaxy Photos, Drier Hose, Walk on Moon (white sheets filled with foam blocks), Pictures of Astronauts, Styrofoam balls (for planets), Glow in the dark stars

### **Barber/Beauty Shop Box**

Combs, Brushes, Hair Clips, Hair Clippers, Mirror, Shower Cap, Empty Beauty Product Bottles, Hair Drier, Curling Iron, Curlers, Scarves, Makeup Brushes, Empty Makeup Containers, Cape, Barrettes, Ponytail Fasteners, Phone, Hair Books, and Appointment Book

Remember when using old items with cords you need to cut them off for safety.

### **Bakery Shop Box**

Bakers Hat, Apron, Rolling Pin, Muffin Tins, Bread Pans, Cookie Sheets, Cake Pans, Measuring Cups and Spoons, Cook Books, Recipe Cards, Mixing Bowls (Stacking bowls for different sizes), Wooden Mixing Spoons, Bakery Menus, Note Pads, Play Money and Register

### **Baby Box**

Small blankets, Dolls, Baby Rattles, Baby Brushes, Baby Bottles, Diapers, Pacifiers, Burp Cloth, Baby bath tub, Wash clothes, and Baby towel

### **Bank Prop Box**

Play Money, Play Checks, Deposit/Withdrawal Slips, Appointment Book, File Folders, Stick-on labels, Stamps/stamp pads for canceling checks, Signs, Cash drawer/safe, Calculators, Adding Machines, Teller's window, Telephone, Clock, Paper Clips, Stapler, Calendar, Credit Cards applications

### **Camping Box**

Flash light, Canteen, Lantern, Binoculars, Tent, Sleeping Bag, Circle of rocks (fire ring), Logs, Camera, Picnic Basket, Picnic Set of Dishes, Table Cloth, Pots/Pans, Camp Stove (cardboard box), Compass Fishing Pole/Tackle, Plastic Worms, Net, Bucket, Bobber, Fishing Pictures, and Sun Hat

### **Chef Prop Box:**

Chef Hat, Apron, Pots & Pans, Measuring cups & Spoons, Wooden spoons, Whisks, Empty Spice Jars, Recipe Cards, Cook Books, Menus, Mixing bowls, Old Mixer, Old Blender, Old Canisters (for flour and sugar) and fake food.

With an old box you can make an oven and stove top. Paint the box and then spray with a clear lacquer for durability. Fold flat for storage.

### **Car Wash**

Hose, Buckets, Sponges, Towels, Spray Bottle, Squeegees, Register, Play Money, Toy Cars and Trucks, tricycles

### **Cowboy/Cowgirl Box**

Straw hats, Boots, Vest (made with brown bags), Bandanas, Chaps (made with brown bags), Saddle, Stick Horses, Blue Jean Jacket, and Oats (for sand/water table)

### **Crossing Guard Box**

Reflective Vest, White Gloves, Stop Sign, Whistle, Masking Tape, and Badges,

### **Farmer Market**

Baskets, Plastic Fruits, Bags, Scale, Register, Play Money, Labels, Overalls, Pail, and Straw

### **Firefighter Box**

Boots, Rain Coats, Bells, Step Ladder, Hats, Hose, Cardboard Truck, Oxygen Tank (made with 2 liter bottles)

### **Garden/Flower Shop Box**

Plastic Flowers, Styrofoam, Plastic Pots, Vases, Baskets, Garden Gloves, Apron, Potting Soil, Potting Trays, Watering Cans, Seeds, Pots, Small Tools, Hose with Sprayer

### **Grocery Store Box**

Brown Bags, Register, Play Money, Play Checks, Empty Food Containers, and Apron

### **Hospital/Doctor/Nurse Box**

Disposable Masks/Shoe Covers, Lab Coats, Stethoscopes, Hospital Pajamas/Gowns, Caps, Gauze Sling, Splints, Doctor Bag, Dolls to work on, Eye Chart, Glasses with Lens popped out

### **Ice Cream Shop**

Plastic Buckets, Scoops, Bowls, Cones, Hats, Aprons, Register, Play Money

### **Lock Smith Box**

Box, Different Locks & Keys, receipt book, Play Mooney, Register, Old Door Knobs, and Chain Locks. I have a wooden board that has different types of locks on it so the children can experiment with how they open and lock.

### **Movie Theatre Box**

Cups/Popcorn Buckets, Flashlight, Tickets, Register , Play Money, Movie Boxes, Black Jackets and Bow Ties

### **Office Box**

Phone, Telephone Book, Key Boards, Adding Machine, Planning Book, Desk Calendar, Pen/Pencils, Phone Message Pad, Old Type writer, Envelopes, Junk Mail, Stamp Pad/Stamps, Stapler, Tape Dispenser, Old Briefcase

### **Painters/Carpenter Box**

Paint Buckets, Paint Sticks, Rollers, Roller Pans, Brushes, Paint Hats, Paint Rags, Hard Hats, Tool Box, Measuring Tape, Lunch Box, Blue Prints, Pipe fittings, Toy Hammers, Styrofoam (to hammer golf tees in), Golf Tees (as nails), Pictures of people painting/building, Pictures of different fazes of construction

### **Police Station**

Police Hats, Badges, Black Belts, Walkie Talkies, Phone, Phone Book, Pad of paper (ticket, Small Clip Boards, 911 Sign, Pictures of Police, Pictures of Police Dogs, Police Car (made out of box

### **Post Office Box**

Mail Bag, Mail Box, Junk Mail, Plain Envelopes, Stamps, Scale, Tape, Pens/Pencils/Markers, Stamp Pad, Date Stamp, Postal Hat, Pictures of Post Office

### **Restaurant Box (Italian/Chinese/Mexican/American/Indian/Thai/Japanese**

Menus, Aprons, Note Pads, Take out boxes, Dishes, Tablecloth, Felt Pizza (make toppings from felt), Yarn (for cheese), Phone

### **Repair Shop Box**

Tool Box, Measuring Tape, Safety Glasses, Small Tools, Rags, Flash light, Real Motorbike Engine, Spark Plugs, Overalls, Gas filler nozzles with hose, Air Pump, Grease Guns, Clip Boards, White Shirt with Ford/Chevron Patches, Car Service Diagrams, Diagnostic Diagrams, Receipt Book, Car Magazines, Tool Catalogs

### **Shoe Store Box**

Shoes, Shoe Boxes, Shoe horn, Foot measuring device, Measuring tape, Play Money, Register, and Story Bags

### **Travel Agency**

Travel Magazines, Phones, Posters, Travel Fliers, Writing Tablets, Camera, Postcards, Maps (AAA old maps)

### **Utility Workers(Phone Company/Electric Company/Water Company)**

### **Veterinarian Box**

Roll Bandages, Disposable Masks, Small Stuffed Animals, Stethoscope, Pet Grooming Tools, Dog leash, Dog Collars, Dog Bones/Milk Bone Box, Cotton Swabs, Food/Water Bowls

### **Wedding Box**

Bow Tie, Long Dress, Veil, Flower Bouquet, Men's Blazer, Just Married Sign

### **Wood Working Box**

Scrap Wood, Nuts & Bolts, Washers

## **Book Related Themes**

### **Brown Bear Book Box**

Blue Horse, Brown Bear, Yellow Duck, Green Frog, Purple Cat, White Dog, Red Bird, Gold Fish, Black Sheep

All props to be made out of felt, head bands and elastic.

### **Three Little Pigs**

Box Houses, Stick, Straw, Brick, Pig Ears/Tail, Wheel Barrow, Wolf Ears/Tail, Big Black Pot, Logs, Door Knocker,

### **Three Little Bears**

Bear Ears (head band and felt), 3 Bowls, 3 Spoons, 3 Chairs, 3 Pillows (for beds)

### **The Little Red Hen**

Wheat, Bread Pans, Measuring Cups, Measuring Spoons, Apron, Mixing Bowls, Wooden Spoons, Red Hen, Dog, Cat, Pig (all made with felt, head hands and elastic)

## **Resource Books**

### **Prop Box Play**

50 Themes to inspire Dramatic Play

By: Ann Barbour and Blanche Desjean-Perratta

### **Literacy Play**

Over 300 Dramatic Play Activities That Teach Pre-Reading Skills

By: Sherri West and Amy Cox