

## **Learning Unit 2**

### **Identify and prepare resources for ECD facilitation**

After completing this learning unit, you will be able to identify and prepare resources for ECD facilitation, by successfully completing the following:

- Identify resources and space needed as per the requirements of the activities.
- Source and select resources.
- Adapt resources.



## ***Identify and prepare resources for ECD facilitation***

As an ECD practitioner, you need to know how to find and choose learning resources to use when you are planning activities. The learning resources you choose to use should meet many criteria. They must be appropriate for the activity you have planned, and be safe, durable, easily available and not too expensive. They should be both familiar and unfamiliar. Familiar resources help children to build on their previous knowledge while unfamiliar resources provide challenges for children. The resources you select need to be free from cultural, race and gender bias and be adaptable for children with special needs. They need to be appropriate to the developmental needs and interests of the babies, toddlers or young children in your playgroup. In this learning unit you will learn how to source and select appropriate learning resources.

### **2.1 Identify resources and space needed as per the requirements of the activities**

As an ECD practitioner, you will need to be able to select appropriate learning resources to match the activities as well as the needs of the children in the class – and don't forget to think about the space that is needed. There are so many resources available that it may sometimes be difficult to choose what you really need and what is appropriate. We will look at the criteria you should use to guide you when choosing and buying resources such as objects, plants, people, animals, technology, toys, etc.

#### **Key elements**

There are five key foundation stones on which every learning activity rests and thus which determine the resources chosen in an ECD classroom.

- They should encourage the children to learn while they are playing.
- The variety of resources should cater for all developmental areas.
- They should facilitate integrated development where possible by addressing more than one developmental area.
- They should be developmentally appropriate.
- They should encourage emergent literacy, numeracy and life skills.

#### **Example**

Let us look at an example of five-year-olds playing a simplified version of “snakes and ladders”:

While playing the game the children are learning and working with counting, which is an emergent numeracy skill. It caters to fine motor (moving pieces on the board), cognitive (counting), social (group game), emotional (learn to cope with winning or losing) and moral development (do not cheat). It is integrated and age appropriate and thus a good choice of a resource.

## 2.2 Source and select resources

In the ECD playroom, we use many different types of learning resources. The different kinds of resources are used to develop different skills and to engage the interest of the children in the learning programme. The more variety there is the more you will be able to maintain the children's attention. It is also important that they learn about the world around them – both natural and man-made elements.

### *Definition of learning resources*

Appropriate learning resources are resources that are suited to the activity in which they are used and support the purpose of the activity. If, for example, you are doing a learning activity to develop fine motor skills with toddlers, you can use strong, thick shoelaces and ask the children to thread four to six big beads onto the shoelace. The learning resources in this example are the strong thick shoelaces and the big beads. They are suitable for the threading activity and support the purpose of the activity which is to develop the toddlers' fine motor skills. Notice that thin shoelaces and small beads would not be appropriate for toddlers. The resources that you select should always be appropriate to the activity and its purpose, and the age and developmental stage of the playgroup.

Before we look in more detail at appropriate learning resources, let us make sure we understand the term. What does the term "learning resource" mean? Write a short definition (two or three sentences) of this term. Make sure you use your own words.

You have probably agreed that a learning resource can be anything that is used to facilitate the learning process. This could be:

- objects such as books, toys, games, puzzles and blocks
- plants and other natural resources that can be found (for example, leaves and pebbles)
- people such as other ECD practitioners and experts.
- animals such as pets and farm animals
- technology such as computers, tape recorders and cd players
- visual aids such as posters and diagrams
- resources for creative art
- outdoor equipment
- puppets, clothes or accessories for dress up and fantasy play
- bought resources (for example, puzzles) or hand-made resources (for example, posters or musical instruments made by the ECD practitioner)

### *Resource categories*

#### **Natural**

Young children must be encouraged to develop a respect for and love of nature. For this reason, we include many different kinds of natural learning resources in the ECD playroom such as leaves for nature collages, seedpods and shells for sorting or beans and other plants that are grown from seed in the classroom. Pets and animals may be kept at the school or brought in to address certain themes.



They are most freely available and thus do not have to cost money. As an ECD practitioner, you can collect items or encourage children to collect leaves and other interesting items when they are out and about.

### **Improvised**

Learning resources can be improvised or created to fulfil a particular purpose. For example, coloured blocks from the block play area can be used to sort into different coloured boxes to teach colours. The children's blankets, chairs and tables could be used to build a "tent" in the classroom where they can play "camping" or "picnic". Children are very creative – so provide them with basic resource to allow them to discover new things and new ways to apply old objects. Adventure play in the garden is one such activity that addresses this need.

As an ECD practitioner, you will need to use your imagination too and improvise as much as possible when working with themes. Your fantasy area can be transformed into a vet's surgery with a few animal soft toys, a desk and some medical items like stethoscopes and bandages.

### **Scrap**

Often learning resources do not have to be expensive and can be developed from scrap materials. For example, you can involve the families by requesting them to help you gather empty boxes of breakfast cereal, plastic tomato sauce bottles, empty peanut butter jars, etc. You can use these scraps to create a corner inside or outside that could serve as a make-believe shop. The children can take turns in being the shop owner and the customers. You can also convert a big box into a doll's house by cutting a door and windows into the sides. The children can get involved too and help you to paint the box during a creative art activity.

Even tables and chairs that are strong enough for adults to sit on can be made from paper maché. It may require effort and time but can also be very beneficial in teaching children to recycle and conserve our precious resources.

### **People**

Parents, grandparents and community members can also be valuable resources as they can share their experiences e.g. a mom who is a nurse could come to school in uniform and talk about her work when you are busy with a theme of "people who help us".

### **Commercial**

The ECD playroom also includes learning resources that may need to be bought. Examples include jigsaw puzzles, picture books and board games or replicas of office equipment such as small computers, cash registers or cameras. It is often very tempting just to buy resources; however, many of them are imported and very expensive and your budget will often not stretch to accommodate all that you would like.

### 2.2.1 Ensure that resources selected are appropriate for use in planned activities and support their identified purpose

When you select resources to by, keep in mind the following:

- Are they safe? This is the most important criteria and is often age dependent. A baby would choke on small pegs from a pegboard, whereas a young child knows not to put it in their mouth.
- Is the equipment appropriate? Does it adequately address the age and stage of the children who will use it?
- Are they suitable? The children in the class should be able to use it comfortably e.g. chairs and tables that are the right height and size.
- Do they address specific skills that children need to develop? Children should be learning self-help skills such as dressing or tying their laces.
- Do they have more than one use? An easel can be used for painting and drawing activities both indoors and outdoors. You can also use an easel to display pictures.
- Are they free from stereotyping? Children should not be exposed to stereotypical books and toys that entrench gender, cultural or racial bias. (ELRU have many suitable books as do Dorling Kindersley.)
- Do the resources provide for a balance of activities? Balance between more active and more passive activities, balance between individual and group use for young children or balance between too easy and too difficult.
- Is it interactive? Toys should encourage active participation, as we know that this is the only way that children learn. Battery-operated toys are generally not suitable but there are exceptions. Ask yourself if the play is in the toy or in the child?
- Are they attractive? Children naturally gravitate towards brightly coloured items.
- Are they easily maintained? Resources should be cleaned regularly and should have smooth surfaces that do not trap dirt and germs. Jungle gyms that are painted will peel and look unattractive whereas pre-treated wood may not look as colourful but does not require much attention.
- Does it cater to the interests in your group? Will the children enjoy using it? Unless it will be used, it is a waste to buy a toy. Certain toys have more appeal at certain ages.
- Are they both familiar and unfamiliar? While children do like to feel secure and use resources they know well, they also need to be challenged and to learn further skills by handling resources that are not familiar.
- Are they classic? Resources that have stood the test of time include building blocks, dolls, Lego, etc. Avoid buying the latest fad toy, as they are often not very suitable and have a limited life span in terms of appeal. These toys are often linked to movies or TV programmes that are soon forgotten when the latest one is being aired.
- Are they economical? Sometimes it is better to buy a more expensive toy that is stronger as it will last longer than the cheap toy that breaks within a few weeks.

- Are they easily available locally? Toys and books that need to be ordered from overseas will be expensive and the ordeal in getting them may not be worthwhile. It is also better to actually see a resource and handle it, before deciding that you would like to purchase it.
- Can they be adapted if need be to accommodate any special needs in your class?
- What do we have that is similar? Are you buying it because it looks good or because you need it? There are often many resources available on a particular theme e.g. “transport”, and you may find you have enough books, toys and puzzles to cover this theme but need more resources for “under the sea”. It is wise to make lists of needs rather than just to purchase for the sake of it.

### **2.2.2 Ensure that resources are available, safe, durable, and within the resource limitations of the programme**

This is one of the most important criteria as briefly discussed in the previous topic. Safety may depend on the age group: for example, beads are suitable for three-year-olds but babies would choke on them. Safety may also depend on the resource itself: any item with sharp edges could be dangerous. We have outlined some important safety aspects below.

#### **Safety**

Safety is an extremely important issue when it comes to buying, making and maintaining resources. Become aware of all the dangers that resources can present, and be vigilant in looking out for them. Many toys and games that can be bought have age guidelines that you should take into consideration.

*Make sure that the resources are not made with the following dangerous elements:*

- toxic paint
- small bits that can be swallowed by little children
- brittle plastic or glass that will have sharp edges when broken
- sharp points: avoid pins, staples and wire
- things that can cause injury when thrown, for example arrows, must have soft cork or foam tips
- working parts that can pinch fingers or catch hair

*When installing fixed outdoor equipment make sure of the following:*

- The equipment is installed on grass or another soft flat surface – never concrete.
- Swing seats are not made of hard or heavy material.
- All the wood is smooth to prevent splinters.
- There are no climbing areas that would allow children ages three to six to fall more than one and a half or two metres.

- The fixed equipment is very secure in the ground.
- There are no sharp edges, broken parts or loose bolts.
- There are no openings that could trap a child's head.
- There is no part of the equipment that could cause scissoring or pinching injuries.
- There are no toxic materials used as preservatives.

*Regularly do the following maintenance checks:*

- Check for broken parts and sharp edges.
- Sand sharp or splintered edges on wooden toys and equipment.
- Regularly check outdoor toys for rust.
- Make sure that equipment to be stood or climbed on is still sturdy.
- Check for worn rope or chains.
- Check for rotting timbers.
- Ask if the resources are right for the age group. Things safe for the older age group may be dangerous to the little ones.

*When supervising the children*

- Instruct them carefully about what they can and cannot do on equipment.
- Enlist children's help in setting up riding rules such as no crashing into one another.
- Foster older children to help care for littler ones.
- Teach them to put things away and treat resources such as books with respect.
- Stand or sit near the equipment where safety is a consideration.
- Never allow young children in paddling pools unsupervised.
- Check that there are no foreign objects in the fall zones under and around fixed equipment.
- Limit turns on equipment that are very popular – set up a one-way traffic system to avoid children colliding into each other.
- Always cover the sandpit to prevent animals using it.

### **Durability**

As you have seen, making sure that the large equipment is strong and durable is a big part of making sure that it is safe.

With smaller resources, too, it is important to make them strong and durable, so that you do not waste your precious time making something that is destroyed a short while later. ECD resources will be used by many little hands and they need to be tough. You want them to keep looking good too – it is discouraging for you and

for the children to see toys and games that look worn out and shabby. Resources need to be strong enough to survive the wear and tear of everyday use.

To make sure that the resources you make are durable, choose your materials wisely:

- Don't use flimsy things that will bend or tear or break easily. Use strong raw materials like tough plastic bottles and containers, wood, reinforced cardboard, pebbles and stones.
- When you make puzzles, card games and board games out of thin cardboard, use good quality glue so that pictures don't peel away. Strengthen them and keep them clean by laminating them with adhesive plastic, or have them laminated professionally. While it may seem expensive, it is economical in the long term as the resources will not constantly need to be replaced.
- When you paint toys, cover the last layer of paint with a layer of varnish.
- Keep each puzzle and game that has small parts in its own strong box and reinforce the corners of these boxes.
- Teach the children to put things away in their proper places so that there is no danger of losing parts or of them being trodden on.

**Safety tips from [www.childsafe.org.za](http://www.childsafe.org.za)**

**General guidelines**

- Toys should suit the age and developmental stage of the child. They should be interesting and involving. Too easy: they become boring; too difficult: they become frustrating.
- Watch age recommendations for toys – they are there for children's safety. Toy labelling for under-threes is the most important. Under three-year-olds, more than older children, are likely to place small objects in their mouths, which present swallowing dangers.
- Be aware of any parts that can be broken or detached from a toy and might be swallowed. This means anything smaller than a ping pong ball and includes items like stickers and labels.
- Avoid badly made toys that could come apart – for example, buttons that could come loose. Again, these present swallowing hazards.
- Do not buy toys with moving parts that could pinch, cut or trap parts of a child's body.
- Toys should be solid, strong and well-made.
- Strings, cords or ribbons over 30 cm long on toys can strangle a child. Avoid them.
- Do not buy toys that need constant supervision; if a child always needs help with a toy, or has to be watched because the toy breaks easily, it is best not to buy the toy.
- Check children's toys for wear and tear; mend them or throw them away.

- Tidy away toys when not in use.
- Do not buy toy guns that could be mistaken for real guns or toys that fire objects that are potentially dangerous.
- Any guide for a toy relates to child development and is not an intelligence guide. Although it is tempting to buy toys that may be suited to an older child, you may not be doing your own child a favour.

*Guide on age-appropriate toys at different ages is available from CAPFSA, PO Box 791, Rondebosch 7701. Tel: 021 6855208.*

*Acknowledgement: Kidsafe, summer 1995. The Magazine of The Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia)*

### **2.2.3 Ensure that resources strike a balance between the familiar and unfamiliar**

The resources that you use must maintain a balance between the familiar and unfamiliar, thus providing consistency and challenge for the children in their life-world experiences.

According to didactic or teaching principles, we work from the known to unknown or familiar to unfamiliar. This can also be applied to resources.

Many of the books, games and puzzles that are produced overseas contain images that are not familiar to many children within a South African context. A typical example is of winter being depicted with snow – for most children in our country this is not a reality. We as ECD practitioners must be aware of our community context and provide the children in our class with more familiar images. This does not mean that we cannot expose them to snow for instance, but we need to look at their age and developmental stage and interests to ensure that we are not confusing them.

There are many resources that can be bought that are made in South Africa and have images that are more familiar to our children.

You will still need to use your discretion and understand the context of the children in your group as children living in a township will have a different understanding to those who are living in leafy suburbs nearby.

#### **Some suitable children's books**

The following books are all published by the Anti-Bias Project of the Early Learning Resource Unit and are available to purchase from ELRU directly. They are well-illustrated and include colour photographs:

- *Anjtie* – Xhosa, English, Tswana and Afrikaans book – about a girl who lives in Genadendal and what she gets up to, including driving a donkey cart.
- *Nkqo! Nkqo!* – Xhosa, English, Tswana and Afrikaans book – various families of different cultures are captured in daily rituals.
- *They were wrong!* – about the prejudices that exist regarding various cultures in Cape Town.
- *At School, What if...?* – about Ncebakazi who uses a crutch and the fears she has of going to a mainstream school for the first time.
- *Mhlanguli* – Xhosa, English, Tswana and Afrikaans book – about a boy who lives in Khayelitsha and does ballroom dancing as a hobby.

### 2.2.4 Ensure that resources are free from cultural, race and gender bias

We need to think carefully of the images and ideas that we are exposing the children to when using resources. Research has shown that children develop attitudes to colour and gender very early in life: by the age of two they notice skin colour and between the ages of three and at the age of five they attach values to it – values such as that you are a more capable and powerful person if you have a white skin.

#### What do we mean by anti-bias?

A bias is the same as a prejudice – it is a judgement about people based on a pre-conceived belief about the group that they belong to and not on fact or on who they are as individuals. A bias means that your expectations of people are defined by their race, culture, religion, gender or disabilities.

The first and strongest influence on children is their parents. Then they are influenced by the many messages around them – at the ECD centre, from friends, from television, from advertising, in books and in comics. Children model the behaviour they see around them. If adults think different roles and behaviours are suitable for boys and for girls, then children will also do so. If adults believe that some cultures are superior and others are inferior, this message will be passed on to their children. ECD practitioners have a large influence on children in their class as they are role models and the children spend many waking hours in their company.



ECD practitioners thus have a responsibility to ensure that the resources used in their classes do not reflect bias but show images of, for example, female doctors who are black or stay-at-home dads. What children *don't* see plays just as much of a part as what they do see; if they don't see disabled people or black people in successful roles, that will play a part in their expectations of people in those groups.

#### What is culture-fair?

It is very likely that the ECD centre where you work will include children from several different cultural backgrounds. Being “culture-fair” means recognising, respecting and affirming all the children’s different cultural backgrounds. Different cultures vary in some important areas of life:

- the size and structure of the family
- language
- food and the way of eating
- dress
- discipline
- customs and traditions
- religion

Children often tease others about differences like language. They need to be taught by your example to understand and value cultural differences.

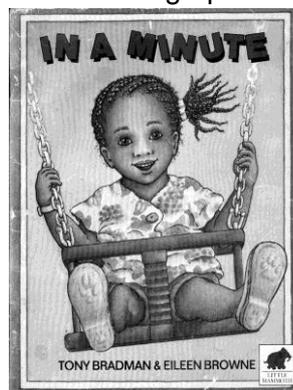
Simple ways to do this would include providing books on various cultures, celebrating festivals from all the different cultures of the children in your class. You can ask the parents of the children to assist by helping you understand and plan for these

celebrations. They can provide for example appropriate food, clothing, or candlesticks, that can be used in your classroom. A parent could visit your class dressed in traditional attire and explain the meaning of the festival. “Make and bake” activities could focus on the different cultures’ foods.

In pictures, books and games, it is important to have positive visual images of the groups that make up society. Whatever their characteristics or background, children should see positive images of themselves in the resources. An excellent example is the pack of “Happy Families” playing cards from ELRU, which show many different types of families.

When making resources such as jigsaw puzzles, card games, matching games, etc, you must make sure that the pictures you use reflect the children in all their diversity. Include pictures of cultures from all over the world, particularly with children over four years of age, as they are ready to learn about the diverse world:

- In the book corner, children need images they can relate to. Photographs of the children themselves are a very useful resource and give them an enormous sense of affirmation.
- Make books by using photos you take of them, for example when you go on an outing.
- Parents can write captions in languages other than English for homemade books and displays.
- In art, mix paints in all the different skin tones so that the children can produce a representation of themselves or others.
- In the imaginative play corner, reflect a variety of cultures in the dressing up materials, play foods, props and in the dolls.



### Learning resources to encourage a gender-fair environment

If adults classify toys along gender lines, children will also do so. In a research study, a group of psychology students were asked to examine a list of 50 toys, and to mark which ones were appropriate for boys, which were appropriate for girls, and which were appropriate for both. The results were that there 24 toys were marked for boys only and 17 for girls only. The boys’ toys included guns, doctor sets, tricycles, remote control cars, microscopes and blocks. The girls’ toys included teddy bears, phones, dolls and dollhouses. The study then analysed the kinds of development promoted by these toys.

The boys’ toys encouraged being social, constructive, aggressive and competitive, while the girls’ toys promoted being nurturing and creative. This research shows that different toys promote different skills, and so have a profound effect on a child’s development.

Support a non-sexist viewpoint in your playroom – especially in areas that are traditionally for girls (like the home corner) or for boys (like science or construction activities). Boys and girls should have equal access to all experiences and should be encouraged to try out the various activities.

Be conscious of the messages that are given out by the children’s books. Is there a fair distribution of stories centred around boy and girl characters? What sort of



activities are men and women shown to be doing? If most of your books show only the traditional roles, then look for books in the library that show girls and boys, men and women, who are breaking the stereotypes.

You can create your own books, as well as posters, games, cards and puzzles that use images showing both sexes in a wide range of roles, for example, a father staying home to care for the children or a woman police officer.

### ***Resources should be adaptable for children with special needs***

Children with disabilities have the same need as the others to see themselves reflected in their school environment. They need to be surrounded by positive role models and to have a positive view of themselves. It is also important for other children to see images and hear stories about disabled people so that they understand and accept them.



Try to find books that show people with disabilities in active roles. Are there any books in your library that have a disabled person as the main character? Look for stories that have characters who are disabled but their disability is not the main focus of the story. (An example is *Vusirala the Giant*, a South African story in which the little girl who defeats the giant walks with crutches.) Again, create your own books by using photographs of all the children in the class.

If you have hearing-impaired children try and provide many stories on tape for them to listen to. For visually impaired children make tactile “touch me” books with textured pictures.

Display pictures of children with different disabilities. Include pictures of them interacting with others who are not disabled. Look for pictures of disabled adults in a variety of roles, as parents, sportspeople, teachers, etc. When you make dolls and puppets for imaginative play, you could add some characters wearing glasses, or a hearing aid, or in a little wheelchair.

Make posters with words like “hello”, “I love you”, “happy” and “sad” in different languages, and include sign language and Braille.

### **2.2.5 Ensure that resources are appropriate to the developmental needs and interests of the children**

The resources you find are often not exactly what you need for a learning activity. You may have to adapt the resources so that they are more appropriate for your playgroup. The term “adapt” means to change to suit your situation. One of the easiest ways to adapt a learning resource for the specific needs of your playgroup is to make your own. For example, you could buy jigsaw puzzles but you may need one with a certain picture to fit in with a theme and a certain number of pieces to suit the development stage of the children. It would probably be easier (and cheaper) to adapt the idea of a jigsaw and make your own than search and search for one that meets your needs.

As an ECD practitioner, you may choose your resources very carefully according to the guidelines we have discussed but you may still find that they are not suitable for all the children in your class.

You may need to adapt or change them to ensure that they are:

- suitable for any special needs in your group
- appropriate to the particular activity
- safe and durable
- familiar but provide challenges and expand the child's life-world experiences
- bias-free
- developmentally appropriate
- reflect the interests of the children in the group



### ***Class Activity 3: Source and select resources***

Please follow the instructions from the facilitator to complete the formative activity in your Learner Workbook.

## **2.3 Adapt resources**

As an ECD practitioner, you should know how to find and choose learning resources to use when you are planning your learning activities. But what do you do if the resources you find are not exactly suitable for the activity you have planned and do not meet all the criteria for appropriate learning resources? The answer is: you adapt the learning resources to suit your needs. You can change learning resources so they are appropriate to the developmental needs and interests of the babies, toddlers or young children in your playgroup. That includes making the resources suitable for children with special needs. You can adapt learning resources so that they are safe and durable and strike a balance between the familiar and the unfamiliar. You can change learning resources so that they are free from cultural, racial and gender-based bias. In this lesson you will learn about adapting resources to make them more suitable.

### **2.3.1 Ensure that adaptations are suited to children with special needs**

These adaptations will depend on the special needs of each child – even two children with the same disability may have special needs that differ. Below are some suggestions and ideas but adaptations are only as limited as your creativity and problem-solving abilities!

There are many ways to adapt resources to suit children with special needs.

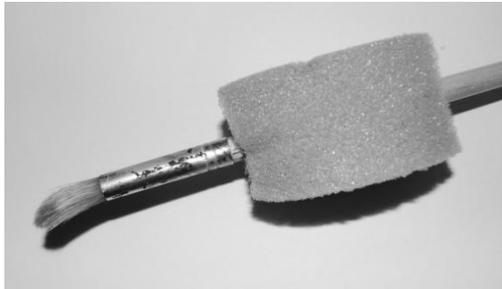
#### **Creative art activities**

Children who have poor fine motor skills and weak pencil grip can be assisted by widening the grip.

Fine motor skills are problematic for many children with special needs. Common resources such as paint brushes are difficult for children with poor fine motor skills to hold. The handle of a paint brush is very thin and it quickly becomes slippery with paint. Fortunately there are some very simple ways to adapt a paint brush to make it easier to hold.

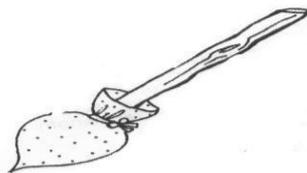
**Adaptation 1 – rubber ball**

Take a small soft rubber ball and make a hole through the centre. Push the paintbrush handle into the hole so that it fits snugly. The child can then grasp the handle by holding the ball. You can also take the foam from a hair curler and put the paintbrush handle into the hole in the foam. You may need to fasten it with tape. If you don't have a hair curler, you can trim a piece of sponge and tape it to the handle, as we see below.

**Figure: adapted paintbrush**

Soft triangular shaped rubber grips are available commercially for kokis and pencils. Children may also find it easier to use thicker, triangular or animal-shaped crayons, which you can buy locally.

Adaptive scissors are available on the internet to suit various needs. The so-called “spring scissors” are very good for children who have poor fine motor skills. While they may be expensive, it could be worthwhile investing in one or two pairs. Provided that they are well cared for, they should last for many years.

**Adaptation 2 – hair curler**

Take an old-fashioned foam hair curler and put the paintbrush handle into the hole in the foam. You may need to secure it with tape. If you don't have a hair curler, you can simply trim a sponge to the shape of a cylinder, as we did. Then push the handle of the brush through. (If this is difficult, push a knitting needle through first to make a “tunnel” through the sponge.)

As you can see from these examples, most adaptations are inexpensive to make, use very basic materials and just need a little creativity.

**2.3.2 Ensure that adapted resources are appropriate for use in planned activities and support the identified**

As you know, appropriate learning resources are resources that are suited to the activity in which they are used and support the purpose of the activity. You can adapt resources to suit an activity. You can also adapt the same resource to suit many different activities.

Let's read a case study about how an ECD practitioner used materials she found to make her own ECD resources to suit many different activities.

**Case Study : Using river pebbles for learning activities**

Tshidi Koli runs the “Brighter Futures” ECD centre in Soweto. Her centre, which caters for 30 children, is well-resourced. However, Tshidi likes to involve children in making resources themselves. The children then use these resources for educational play. Tshidi tries to expose children to natural materials whenever she can. She says that children

are often surrounded by plastic toys, games and apparatus, and they tend to forget the natural world they live in. She collected a bag of smooth river pebbles, and decided to use them as the basis for a range of learning activities. Here's what she did:

### **Toddlers' painting activity**

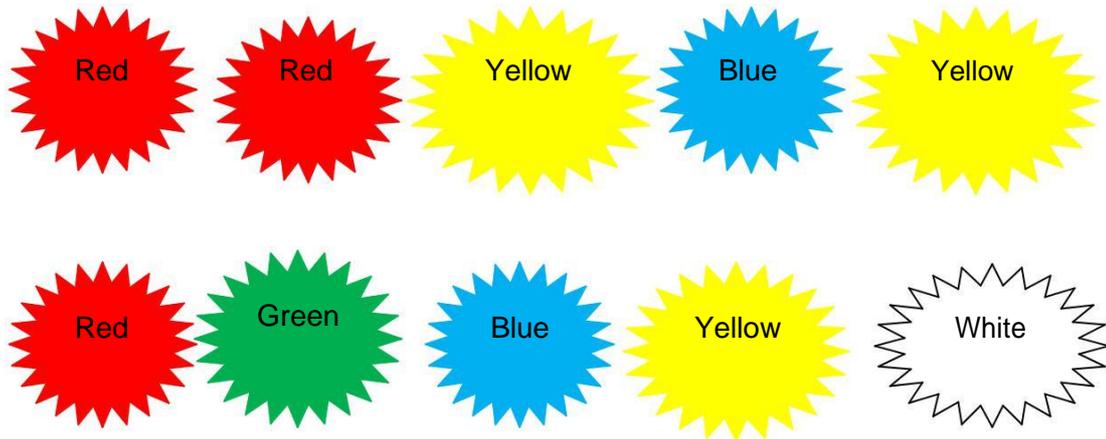
Tshidi set up a painting activity for toddlers. She gave each child five river pebbles. She asked the toddlers to paint each pebble a different colour: red, blue, green, yellow and white. Later, she used the painted stones for other activities.

### **Toddlers' sorting activity**

Tshidi took five cardboard boxes. She painted a strip of colour on each box, using the colours red, blue, green, yellow and white. She gave each child a pile of different coloured pebbles, and asked them to sort the pebbles into the correct boxes.

### **Toddlers' patterning activity**

Tshidi gave each toddler a pile of painted river pebbles. She used the river pebbles to create a pattern, and asked the children to copy the pattern.



### **Young children's painting activity**

Next, Tshidi set up a more complex painting activity for a group of five year olds. She gave each child six river pebbles. She asked the children to paint the numbers 1 to 6 on the river stones. When the stones were numbered, she used the numbered stones to play games.

### **Young children's sorting activity**

This time she needed six cardboard boxes. She painted a number from 1 to 6 on each box. She gave each child a pile of numbered pebbles and asked them to sort the pebbles into the correct boxes.

### **Young children's number recognition activity**

For this game, Tshidi made a different bingo card for each child and also gave each child a pile of numbered pebbles. She then called out numbers to the group. The

children had to match their numbered pebbles with the numbers on the card. The first child to fill a card would call out “Bingo!”

<b>Bingo!</b>	
5	3
1	4

**Tips: it would be a good idea to**

- get it done professionally as it will be more economical in the long run.
- where possible, keep pieces of games and puzzles in boxes. You can strengthen boxes with clear packaging tape and cardboard pieces. Alternatives to boxes are plastic throw-away containers from ice-cream, cheese wedges, etc.

It makes no sense to spend money to buy or make resources for them that they will destroy after using it only once.

### **2.3.3 Ensure that adapted resources are safe and durable**

It is not only the actual learning programme that can be an adapted resource. In the South African context ECD centres often have to be innovative with their resources because of the lack of funds.

For example: Use tyres as swings, or sand pits. These are durable and easily obtainable. Safety is of importance though. In this case ensuring that there are no wires protruding from the tyre and that the swing is secure in its post.

Before you use a resource that has been adapted (such as paint or equipment) check that the substitute materials are not toxic, and that the equipment is safe.

The term *safe* also implies that you are sensitive when adapting a learning resource, and that you make sure that all the learners feel secure with the changes.

### **2.3.4 Ensure that adaptations help to strike a balance between the familiar and unfamiliar**

As an ECD practitioner, one of your many roles is to expose children to a variety of resources that are free from cultural bias. In our multi-cultural country, it is vital that children learn tolerance and respect for one another as well as an appreciation for diversity. You may need to adapt or create resources to ensure that they do not reinforce any gender, culture or racial stereotypes.

Songs, rhymes and poems can be adapted by changing words and names to suit a South African context. This also helps to make them more familiar. However, be careful when you change the words and make sure that you do not change the basic meaning, rhythm or rhyming of words.

*Here are some examples:*

- “Do you know the muffin man.....who lives in Drury Lane?” The words can be changed to  
“Do you know the pizza man....who lives in Tableview?”
- Very traditional English names could be changed too. “Mary had a little lamb” could become “Thandi had a little lamb”.

Children love it when their opinions about the changes are asked and they may often come up with very imaginative suggestions. Five-year-olds who are comfortable in a language naturally participate in this type of activity as part of their developmental milestones.

Remember though that it may confuse children if you are reading from a book and merely change names. Children who are developing literacy skills may go back to the book later and not be able to match the name they heard to the one that is in print. A better option is to use a story as a basis and tell the story rather than read it. You can contextualise and localise the content and names using suitable illustrations or props that you have made. This approach is often used in theatre. For instance, every year at Maynardville Shakespeare plays are presented in contexts that are more modern than their original setting.

While you may not be able to change games and educational toys, you can use the base ideas to create your own resources. The concepts below are inter-changeable and are meant to get you thinking of your own idea.

- Lotto – instead of animals that are not endemic, you could have lions, hippopotami, giraffes, etc.
- Dominoes – use matching pictures of different cultural items or food.
- Puzzles – use pictures depicting local scenes or people.
- Flash cards – have fathers hanging up washing, women who are doctors, etc.
- Snap cards – use pictures of groceries including items like mealie-meal, pasta, samosas, etc.

### **2.3.5 Ensure that adaptations are free from cultural, race and gender bias**

Puppets and dolls can be adapted by changing their clothes or accessories to make them bias-free. Here are a few typical examples of adaptations that can easily be made:

- Males can wear pink shirts.
- Wire glasses can be added to stimulate awareness of special needs.
- Not all grannies have grey hair and buns – change the hair on a bought puppet by colouring it with a koki.

When you create your own resources you can make puppets that are male nurses or female police officers. Use different flesh tones to depict various races.

### 2.3.6 Ensure that adaptations are appropriate to the developmental needs and interests of the children

We must meet children's developmental needs and interests in order for them to obtain the maximum learning opportunities possible from an activity. Three-year-olds who are very egocentric (self-centred) and show interest mostly in the things they experience, would not be interested in a theme or activity that is based on travelling into space. Five-year-olds, though, would be interested as they can conceptualise the ideas better.

Below are some suitable themes for various ages. Please note though that interests also depend on the media that the children are exposed to every day. Think of how popular certain comic characters become when a new movie is released, or the excitement around the Olympics, Soccer World Cup in 2010 or Rugby World Cup in 2011.

#### Themes for different developmental stages:

Toddlers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Me and my body</li> <li>• My family</li> <li>• My home</li> <li>• My school</li> <li>• Healthy food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping clean</li> <li>• My pets</li> <li>• Colours</li> <li>• Sounds around</li> <li>• Big and small</li> </ul>
Young children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My body – uses of limbs, etc</li> <li>• Feelings and moods</li> <li>• Senses and disabilities</li> <li>• My extended family</li> <li>• Types of food</li> <li>• Babies</li> <li>• Shapes</li> <li>• Farm animals</li> <li>• Wild animals</li> <li>• Baby animals</li> <li>• Animal homes</li> <li>• Transport – land, air, sea</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People who help us</li> <li>• Stranger danger and safety</li> <li>• Spring</li> <li>• Summer</li> <li>• Autumn</li> <li>• Winter</li> <li>• Opposites</li> <li>• The beach</li> <li>• Under the sea</li> <li>• The forest</li> <li>• Night and day</li> <li>• Hygiene and health</li> </ul>
Pre-schoolers (5–6 yrs)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life cycles</li> <li>• Under the sea</li> <li>• Strange and different animals</li> <li>• Mammals vs Reptiles</li> <li>• Insects</li> <li>• Dinosaurs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weather</li> <li>• Seasons and how they change</li> <li>• Pollution and littering</li> <li>• Professions</li> <li>• Mining</li> </ul>

These theme ideas are based on an adaption of the learning spiral from Jerome Bruner who is a contemporary educational theorist. He is one of a group of constructivists who believe that people are responsible for building their own ideas and knowledge. We do so by building on what we already know and understand. It all starts with knowing ourselves.



***Class Activity 4: Adapt resources***

Please follow the instructions from the facilitator to complete the formative activity in your Learner Workbook.