



## Make Your Dollars Stretch with Freebies

Toys and art materials can cost a lot of money. You can stretch your dollars by looking for free things or asking parents and neighbors to save items for your program.

What local businesses are in your area? Try asking for these items to start:

**Computer paper** — to use for drawing and other art projects. (Used paper with printing on one side is great—the children can use the blank side.)

**Ends of paper rolls** — ask your local newspaper for the ends of newsprint rolls for finger painting, painting big pictures, drawing, tracing children's bodies, and gift wrapping.

**Wood scraps** — ask local lumberyards or construction companies if you can go through their scrap piles. Soft woods such as pine, cedar, or spruce are good for children's woodworking. Sand down small pieces of wood to add to your block area.

**Wallpaper books and paint color chips** — ask for them at stores that sell paint, wallpaper, or floor coverings. Use to make art projects, collages, etc.

**Display pictures** — grocery stores often give away used pictures of food. You may also want to check with photo stores, sport-

ing goods, and drug stores for display pictures.

**Large cardboard boxes** — boxes from refrigerators, ranges, big TV sets, etc. make great tunnels, playhouses, puppet theaters, or quiet places to read. Cut them apart for large pieces of cardboard to draw on, make roads for cars and trucks, or use them to cover a table before starting a big painting project.

**Carpet pieces or samples** — carpet stores may have small pieces left from a job. Use them for sitting mats and pretend play.

Many parents and neighbors would love to give things to you instead of throwing them away. Make a list of things you can use with the children. You may want to include these:

**Old magazines, catalogs, and greeting cards** — for children to cut apart for collages, puzzles, and other art projects.

**Clothes, shoes, jewelry, purses, neckties** — for children's pretend play.

**Scarves** — for dancing, pretend play.

**Men's shirts with buttons down the front** — to cover children's clothing when they paint.

**Plastic dishes and kitchen utensils** — for children's pretend play or for playing in sand and water.



**Check with businesses, parents, and neighbors to get things for free.**

**Plastic squirt bottles** — for playing with water.

**Buttons** — for stringing, counting, sorting, play money.

**Plastic gallon ice cream containers** — use for storage bins, space helmets, or trash baskets.

**Office paper** (used on one side) — children can draw on the blank side or use for other art projects.

**Garden leftovers** (an extra tomato plant in the pack, perennial plants that need cutting back, extra vegetables from home gardens) — use the plants for a gardening project; add extra vegetables to your lunch or snack menu.

**Small cardboard boxes, such as shoeboxes or jewelry boxes** — children can use them for pretend play, doll beds, car garages, beanbag toss games, and art projects. Tape the lids on and they can be stacked like blocks.

**Clean, empty food containers, such as yogurt cups, cottage cheese containers, cereal boxes, oatmeal boxes, pudding boxes, plastic peanut butter jars, milk cartons, etc.** — children can use them in pretend play or to hold art supplies.

**Scraps of wrapping paper, fabric, ribbon, elastic, and yarn** — for art projects.

**Empty film cans** — use them for stacking and counting; put some rice or beans inside and seal the lid to make musical shakers.

**Empty cardboard tubes** (from toilet paper, paper towels, wrapping paper) — as tunnels for little cars and trucks, for pretend and block play as well as art projects.

**Paper grocery bags** — children can draw on them, make them into puppets, cut holes for arms and wear them for pretend play.

Many child care homes hang a “wish list” of things they need on a bulletin board or hand a list to parents. It’s usually easy to get parents to save old clothes, magazines, and toilet paper rolls. Don’t be afraid to think big! Some child care homes have received storage shelves, riding toys, furniture, even a computer by letting others know what they need!



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 Sources: *Gifts for Your Program: Getting Free Supplies and Services*, by Nancy Gaumer, *Iowa Family Child Care Handbook*, by Lisa Oesterreich, Bess Gene Holt, and Shirley Karas.

Supported by funds from the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Pennsylvania Child Care/Early Childhood Development Training System, Developed by the Better Kid Care Program. 253 Easterly Parkway, State College, PA; Phone: 1-800-452-9108. Website: [betterkidcare.psu.edu](http://betterkidcare.psu.edu).

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