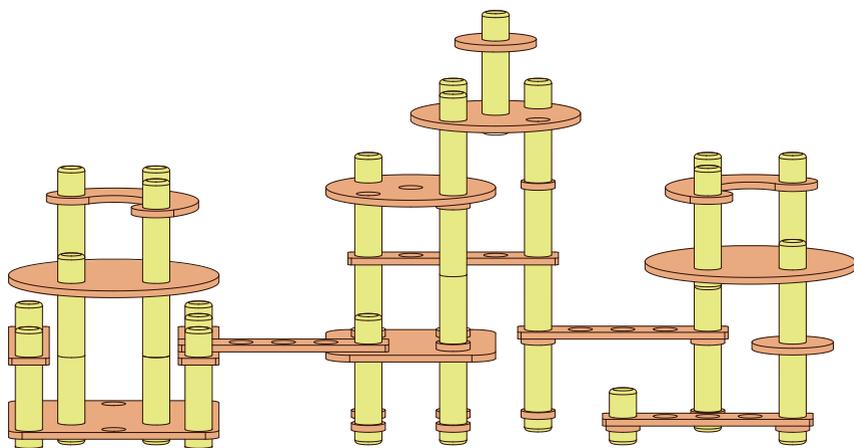


Alice Sharp's Eco Build a World

*A beautiful collection of open-ended
loose parts for imaginative play.*



Eco Credentials



We are committed to reducing our environmental impact and to continually improve our environmental performance.



In creating this resource we have worked with our supplier to make it as environmentally responsible as we can. We have looked closely at our materials and our sourcing procedures.

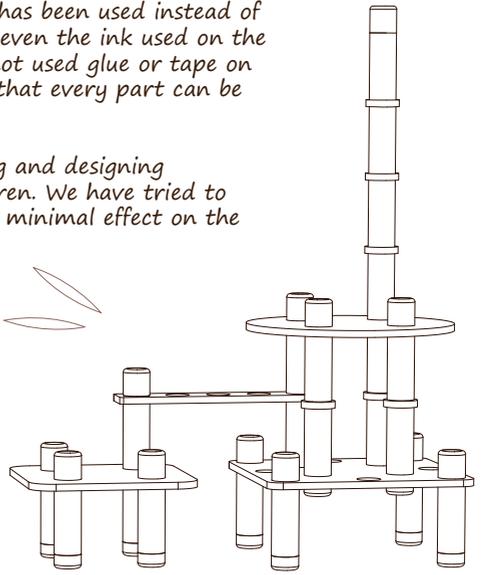
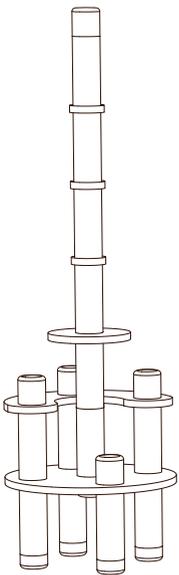
The bases are made from bamboo, a fast growing crop. It is known for its durability and strength. It is a renewable source. Bamboo produces very little waste as most parts of the plant can be utilised. It doesn't require chemicals to thrive. The bamboo roots remain to aid the next crop and to avoid soil erosion.



The tubes are made from a wooden pulp mixture and the joiners are from recycled plastic. The notes are printed on recycled paper.

We have thought about how to make the packaging as minimal as possible to reduce waste. The use of tissue paper and inner boxes has been used instead of having single-use plastic and even the ink used on the box is eco friendly. We have not used glue or tape on the cardboard box to ensure that every part can be 100% recycled.

This resource is about building and designing opportunities for young children. We have tried to create it in a way that it has minimal effect on the planet they live on.



A word from the author Alice Sharp

How often have you heard someone say 'it's a small world'? They recall something or someone that usually has a happy response with a shared memory visited. Have you ever been on a theme park ride 'it's a small, small world'? My children loved it and I remember the song going round in my head for days after. The awe and wonder, the imagination sparks it ignited, the many, many weird and wonderful conversations we shared about everything we had experienced in the small, small world we had visited. Working with TTS, the catalyst was turned into a resource for settings to make their own awe and wonder moments.



Would it not be amazing if all the small worlds, tiny worlds, different worlds we introduced children to could capture those emotional responses? I actually got my idea for Eco Build a World from my three cats, Alpha, Retro and Reckless. Watching them twist, turn and squeeze through their cat tower into the smallest spaces or stretching between other spaces, creating their own playground. They made me think of how the structure itself was always the same. Just like the farm yards, fire stations, tree-houses we may place into the 'small world area' in our settings.

I also have never met a child who doesn't love little things, small bits and pieces that can be adapted, extended and manipulated to create little places and spaces. Children love to create tiny 'nooks' that can become a spaceship, a lion's den, a bear cave or a pirate ship. They can create little adventures for their characters.

Eco Build a World is so versatile that even after placing the kit in over 22 ways I keep finding other ideas and possibilities. It is so open-ended that the children will play with the pieces in many different ways. Their imaginations will enable them to create all kinds of amazing and exciting little locations. It is a collection offering so many possibilities.

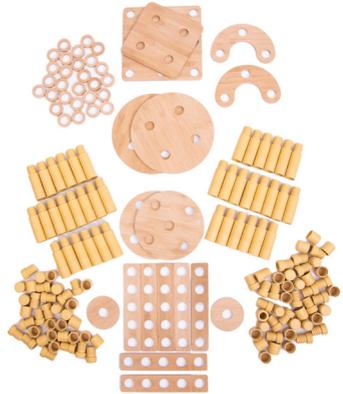
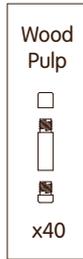
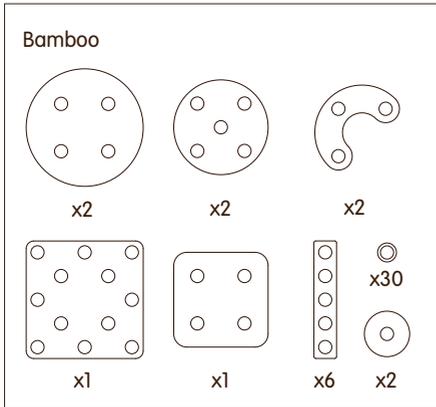
Have fun!

Alice

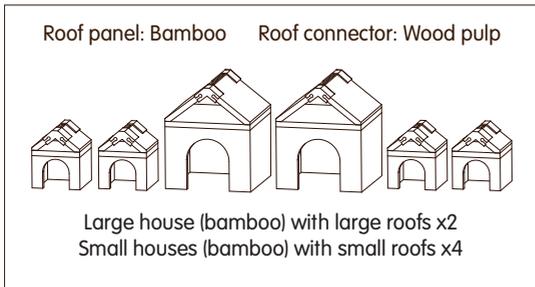


The Kits

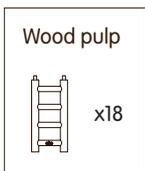
Eco Build A World - EY11634



Eco Small World House Set - EY11093



Small World Ladders - EY11041



Introduction

“So many possibilities.”

Eco Build a World is a set of various loose parts that can be connected together to provide a rich variety of play scenarios. The collection can be used as manipulatives, construction, role play, small world play and a plethora of STEAM activities.

It is designed to be open-ended and versatile, so that the ideas come from the children’s imaginations. They will be the designers, the engineers, the artists and the inventors. As adults we cannot imagine what they will suggest. The sheer versatility enables children’s own interests to be supported and developed. We want them to ponder, reflect, test, predict, evaluate, and most of all to create what they envisage. This will support a sense of discovery, perseverance and resilience. Consider the language skills, the heightened mathematical understanding, the science elements and the rich source of creativity that can emerge.

Ensure that the children can easily access various components. Some children will need time to reflect and work out how the different parts fit together. Have a rich array of accessories available from, material, figures, animals, loose parts etc. so that the children can enrich and accessorise their play.

Some children may just enjoy connecting, sorting, manipulating and building the components. This may be very rewarding and satisfying for them. Others may have very fixed ideas of a specific fantasy environment they wish to create.

As with all learning contexts there has to be thorough risk assessments carried out to ensure the safety of all involved. This is pertinent particularly to the additional accessories, loose parts, ‘junk modelling elements’ and found materials that are not classified as conversational ‘toys’, but do enrich the play.

We have been working on this innovative project for three years and along the way we have modified and adapted the design to make it as adaptable, robust, eco and imaginative as we can. Some of the images therefore may look slightly different to the final version that we are really excited to bring to you.



Loose Parts Play

“The child is the architect of their own play.”

Loose parts play is generally recognised as being where children can select from a rich variety of different materials and components in order to make their imaginative designs. This collection is therefore a great addition to this kind of play. The pieces are really open-ended and versatile. They can be positioned to make many and varied configurations. The children can experiment, investigate, position and manoeuvre the components to make their desired project. They can imagine it and then build it. It is not a prescriptive set, with fixed outcomes. The children are able to make their own decisions and choices. They can amend, adjust and alter as they go. The ideas may be quite simple. It may be a tower or it may be a grand scheme relating to building a whole town.

Used in conjunction with other materials the possibilities are even greater. They can equally be used separately.

Some children will use the loose parts in different contexts. They may play with them symbolically. It could be the tubes represent binoculars to look through or a rolling pin to make a pie.

Loose parts play offers a wealth of exciting learning possibilities.



STEAM

Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Maths

“Enable me to use a rich variety of skills.”

STEAM learning promotes children's problem solving, creativity and critical thinking by bringing together Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics. It is an integrated approach, rather than single subject teaching and learning. We want to encourage children to utilise a rich variety of skills to imagine, design, to problem-solve and most of all have fun!

S Children are able to investigate, explore, discover and analyse. This collection offers children the opportunity to experiment, hypothesise, predict and test out their ideas. They will be working with and gaining an understanding of materials and their properties.

T Technology can become a vital component of this learning. They could use technology to research their designs on a computer. They can integrate their findings into their creations. The laboratory they build may have technological equipment. There may be sound buttons on the rocket ship. There may be door bells on the house. The possibilities are rich and varied.

E Children can incorporate engineering skills into their work. They will make discoveries of how materials and components can be utilised, amended and manoeuvred. They can engineer the pieces to meet their own specifications. They can discover how the pieces operate and interact.

A There are so many opportunities to be creative. They can design and build. They can decorate and enrich their structures and sculptures. They will probably conjure up creative scenarios and adventures, woven around detailed narratives.

M The set enables children to work with different weights, sizes, shapes and lengths. They will be matching, sorting, comparing, estimating, counting and measuring. A host of practical mathematical opportunities may underpin the learning.



Construction

“Building my dream locations.”

Construction activities can be really varied. It is important to offer children a diverse collection of materials so that they can choose for themselves which best suits their project. If they only experience blocks that are in one material, that easily fit together and are in one shape they will not be experiencing new challenges.

Ideally, when they are playing with construction materials they will experience different weights, sizes, shapes, properties and joining techniques. We need to question if the materials we provide for the children are all very similar. Are they all cuboids, do they all connect in the same way and do they offer enough flexibility for the children's dreams to be fulfilled?

By incorporating these cylinders and platforms into a wider construction range the children will have a host of possibilities. Equally there is so much that can be created just with the sets alone.

You may build it along the floor, go up and across, long and low, up and up or wherever you choose to take the design. It can be on table tops, in dens, in small world areas etc. Imagine the set used in conjunction with wooden blocks, foam bricks, Lego, Glacier Bricks, Glow Bricks, cardboard boxes and guttering.

This unique set offers a fresh, exciting and engaging approach to all kinds of construction play opportunities.



Schemas

“Empower me to follow my interests.”

We see schemas as repeated patterns of behaviour that enable children to explore and enrich their developing ideas through play. The repetitive actions enable children to make meaning of what they are doing and the world around them. Different children will have varied interests. This set has a wide variety of possibilities for supporting children’s learning and helping them make vital connections.

Here are a few ways which may illustrate how the children are utilising the resource to support their interests.

Positioning

Children may line up and position the pieces in a variety of ways. They may discover how to join, connect and balance the different elements. Some children may sort the pieces into specific groups. They may make pathways and patterns.

Rotation

Children may use the bamboo tubes to roll across different surfaces as they are fascinated by how things can be rotated. They may explore how things can be twisted and turned.

Connecting

This schema supports children who enjoy joining things together. They may like to build and balance the pieces. They can investigate how things can be slotted together and how they can be manipulated.

Transforming

Some children may enjoy constantly changing and altering their creations. They may take a piece of the kit and make it into something new.



Small World Play

“Creating miniature locations.”

This set lends itself to a rich variety of mini-worlds. Children can create familiar landscapes, imaginary ones, scenes from around the globe, scenarios from books and so much more. Alice talks of the love of building mini places, with miniature people, animals, furniture etc. There is something very appealing and engaging about it.

The children can dream of faraway lands and then create it, using the core structures and then enriching it with other accessories. They can be creative, experimental, explorative and dramatic. They can work collaboratively or independently. They may have to plan, design, challenge, negotiate, design and amend. They have to be resourceful and inventive.

Their vocabulary can be extended and enriched by being part of enchanted glades, humid rainforests, icy tundra and lunar landscapes. They may be in pretend oceans or in castles in the sky. They will be storytelling, using language to convey, influence and to stir imaginations. Consider how the joyous narratives unfold around these little microcosms of worlds.

Consider not only the language skills but the mathematical enrichment as they measure, compare, contrast and count. They will be using their fine motor skills to manipulate and manoeuvre. They will use scientific skills to build the structures, test the various materials and understand their properties.

The social and cognitive possibilities are huge. All these elements can be present in these play based opportunities, supported and scaffolded by sympathetic practitioners who can appreciate when to intervene and when to observe.

With all these scenarios children will need easy access to a rich variety of additional materials that can enhance and take the play further. If they want, for example to build a farm they will need access to a tractor, animals etc. They may choose to make their barns and their fences with other materials such as lolly sticks. They may use different fabrics as a field. The feeding trough may be an old yoghurt pot.

Readily available fabrics, art and craft supplies, loose parts, scrap materials, figures, animals, joining techniques etc. will all help with the transformations.



Dinosaur World

“Immerse yourself in a prehistoric landscape.”

The children may choose to place the structure on a green base, a carpet or a piece of fabric. This may form the forest floor. Imagine adding plants, real and pretend to create the flora and fauna. You could wrap pretend ivy around the structures. Add some moss and create a pretend swamp or perhaps a river for the dinosaurs to drink from. Stones, boulders etc. could be dotted around. You could even create little caves for the flying creatures to soar into or rest a while. Straw or raffia could be an excellent way of making nests. The children could make salt dough eggs. Use different research methods to find out what a real dinosaur landscape would have looked like. We know that there would have been ferns, trees and volcanoes. How will you make the foliage? You could perhaps use crepe paper and tissue paper. A pond or swamp could be contained in a small pot so that the children can experience wet and dry materials, further developing their vocabulary. It could be sloppy, gloopy, swampy etc. The story ‘Tyrannosaurus Drip’ by Julia Donaldson may be a great starting point.

The platforms may make a great mountain range, with hidden caves and a forest for the large dinosaurs to roam down below.



The Land of Elves and Fairies

“Enter a magical world full of awe and wonder.”

You could create a fantasy world, where elves and fairies live. The houses could become their dwellings. You may want to decorate them with natural materials such as moss, leaves and feathers. Equally it may be creating a thatched roof or one made from wooden lolly-pop sticks. You could attach the pieces to a cardboard base and simply sit it on the bamboo roof.

The enchanted glade could be on different levels. You may want to make the furniture for the elf houses. What would they need? Would they require a garden with a wishing well, a post box, a bridge etc.? This could be a really magical setting, with fairy doors, secret pathways, vegetable gardens, potion centres etc.



*Additional pieces used



Mini Beast World

“A tiny world, brimming with little creatures.”

This is often something that fascinates children. You may want to go exploring for the creatures in the real world first. Why not go on a bug hunt, sensitively looking for the fascinating mini beasts? Discuss with the children how they need to treat them carefully.

You may want to place this world on a pretend, grass rug. There could be various habitats for different creatures. Where will the ladybirds live? Where will the bees fly to? These creatures all have unique habitats and you could research this together with the children. You could incorporate lots of natural materials, such as pieces of bark for the woodlice. There could be pretend flowers for the bees and butterflies. There might even be a bug hotel or mini hive. What will the millipede crawl into? The spider may need help spinning its web across the pillars. It might even catch a fly.

This theme may really help the children to appreciate, to care for and understand how important these little creatures are.



An Underwater Adventure

“Dive deep into the oceans depths.”

The pieces could be transformed into a magical, underwater kingdom. You may wish to build this on the floor, on a table, in a tray etc. A tray could hold sand. You could add drift wood and make mini salt dough caves and pretend coral. Seaweed could be made from curly pipe cleaners, or cut up green plastic bags, crepe paper or ribbons. You could add real shells too. Discover what creatures live in the sea. Have you got a pretend shark, lobster, crab etc.? Jellyfish could be made from old yoghurt pots, ribbons, tissue paper etc.

Perhaps there is a shipwreck with a hoard of treasure on the seabed. The structure may be an underwater kingdom for its own people who can breathe under the water. Are there mermaids who swim around?

You may even get to see sea monsters who live deep down in the depths. You could have divers searching for pearls. Why not cut up an old necklace and place some pretend pearls inside shells. The children may well have seen popular films that are about underwater adventures and they may wish to recreate them.



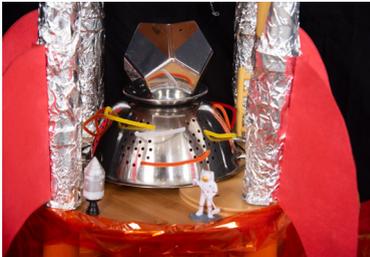
In Outer Space

“Soaring across the universe.”

The children may choose to build a space centre. It could be on a real planet or an imaginary one. The centre could be staffed by astronauts, scientists etc. Consider how it would look? Will it be silver and shiny? Will it have a control desk and laboratories? Will there be landing pads and spaces for the buggies? What about satellites? Will the landscape have boulders, sand, gravel etc.? Will there be aliens, space lakes, craters, volcanoes and rivers?

As well as building and creating locations, it could be transformed into a rocket itself. The backdrop could be a starry constellation. There could be the planets hanging from a mobile above the children's heads. Shout out a countdown for blast off. You could use a recording device and press the buttons, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, lift off!

The pieces could then be transformed into a lunar buggy, an alien craft etc. There really are so many possibilities for your space adventure.



**Additional pieces used*



Jungle/Rainforest Lodge

“A tropical adventure.”

Why not have a house that is built on various levels amidst the rainforest? It could be a house in the clouds or in the canopy. All kinds of creatures could live there. Imagine exotic birds, bats, frogs etc. Butterflies could cascade from the mobile above. A big cat may be sleeping on a branch or snake may slither down it. Perhaps there are lookout stations to observe the wildlife. These could be camouflaged to avoid detection. Who are the conservationists, the wildlife experts who look after things? Is there a watering hole at the base where the animals come to drink at night? Is there a herd of elephants?

Imagine all the learning that could emerge? The children are developing their understanding of nature and ecology. They are learning about different species, where they live, what they eat, their names, their young's names and their collective terms. This could be a beautiful, ivy clad, foliage covered location, teeming with life and adventures.



*Additional pieces used



The Laboratory

“What will be invented?”

Alice created an amazing laboratory where things could be devised, engineered and imagined. Each level could be a different theme or have a specific purpose. There was even a robot factory.

This could be an inventing world. What could an old cake tin be utilised as? What could be created? The children could set the scene, utilising things that are around them e.g. a whisk, a colander, a steel bowl and even a silver cake board. A slinky could be draped from different levels. It could be all kinds of re-purposed items from bath plugs to bottle tops. An old box might become a lift to the next floor. Being able to select materials and to then re-imagine its use is a great cognitive, imaginative challenge.



Santa's Workshop

“Discover a magical place where toys are made and a very special person lives!”

Santa's busy workshop could be created. It could be nestled in a snowy backdrop. There could be a house for Mr and Mrs Claus. Will it be decorated with candy canes? Where will they go and what will they do when they are not working? Will they build a snowman? Where will the reindeer stay? Imagine a city dedicated to all things Christmas. There could be a garage for the sleigh and you could even build your own. What gifts will there be? How will they be wrapped? Perhaps you could support by having a variety of wrapping paper for children to wrap up the Christmas presents.

You may even want to have elf costumes ready for the children to wear. The workshops could be on different levels and each could have a different theme. Perhaps one level could be for designing toys, a carpenters' workstation, a builder's yard, packaging etc. Imagine this busy scene laid out on the floor, music in the background and everyone in a Christmas mood. For me, the perfect story for this is the Polar Express by Chris Von Allsburg, as this would provide magical enrichment.



Land of Ice and Snow

“Enter a snowy landscape with glistening glaciers and floating icebergs.”

The structure could be an Arctic base where animals and the Polar Regions can be studied. It could be a space of icy landscapes and tundra. The location could be built on a huge white, sparkly cloth, set against white walls, depicting glaciers. There could even be a large tray, such as the Active World Tray (Tuff Spot) full of pretend snow. Add boulders, Glacier Bricks, stones and moss to help set the scene. Investigate which animals live where. Do penguins live in both the poles? Do polar bears? Where will the seals rest? You may wish to create a frozen sea, complete with icebergs floating across the icy water.

This is a great way of introducing not only new and exciting locations but learning about our planet and the need to look after it. They will learn about frozen landscapes, animal names, properties etc., in a play based context. They will help to create a land of icy waters, a frozen wilderness, snowy scenes and a place where animals dwell.



A Place to Live

“Building your dream home.”

Imagine being able to design your own house? What would you have inside? Would it have secret passageways, balconies, a grand staircase, chandeliers, lifts, a ballroom, a library etc.? Would there be garages, a garden, a swimming pool and perhaps even a helicopter pad?

The children may create their home in any shape they wish, with as many rooms and gardens as they desire. They may wish to draw a design first, ensuring they have all the essentials such as a kitchen, bathroom, bedrooms etc. and then let their imaginations really spring forth. They may wish to choose the colour schemes, the floor coverings and may even add lighting (battery only and risk assess). They may choose to utilise small world furniture, characters etc. that are already within their learning environment. Equally they may photograph themselves and place their photo on a block so that there is a realistic representation of themselves.

Homes are something that children are familiar with. They may choose to model pretend behaviour that they have encountered such as gardening, cooking and fixing things. Not all homes look the same. Some children may live in apartments, boats etc. but the pieces can be transformed into whichever style they choose. Homes are a rich and varied source of inspiration.



Castles in The Air

“Creating a fortress full of adventures.”

The resource can be transformed into an engaging castle. It could be a place for Robin Hood to visit or a fairy tale castle for Sleeping Beauty, (complete with foliage).

You could incorporate crenelated walls, a drawbridge and tall towers. Who would live in the castle? Will it be knights and queens? Perhaps a dragon lives in the dungeon. Will there be a moat around the base? If so, what lives in the moat? Lots of stories are based around castles and one of them may be the catalyst for your adventure.



A Floating Village

“A home resting on an ocean.”

Around the world different people live in all kinds of homes. It could be that they live in a tall multi-story home, a home that moves or even a home on stilts. This was the inspiration for this theme. Some families live on the water and their home is built on pillars. The sea could be represented by blue fabric, an old curtain or a large piece of paper. There could be boats, fish etc. They may have to travel to school by boat. The school itself may be on stilts over the water. Learning about our similarities and differences is important. Most of us have some kinds of home, where we eat, rest and live. It just may look a little different, depending on where we live in the world.



*Additional pieces used



Additional Ideas for Small World Environments

The pieces could be made into different platforms. It could be utilised for sorting, classifying and matching. Provide a rich variety of items to be sorted. This could range from animals e.g. sorting all the cows, sheep and chickens. Children may classify these to where they live e.g. polar bears live in the Arctic. It may be using the sections as shelves to place those of a certain property e.g. metal, wood, paper etc.



Colour Sorting

The children could sort according to colour. They could make colour collections of all kinds of objects. Tonal sorting is a great activity as it gets the children to really focus on how colours can be very different, e.g. there are many shades of green, from emerald to sage. This is a lovely language opportunity for not just using the word red, but ruby, crimson and scarlet.

Number Levels

The levels could be used for amounts. You could count up and down. On the fifth level there could be 5 people, each will have five things. Which level would the three bears go to? You could place the stories of the number on each level. There might be all the same objects, but different amounts with the numeral on each level.

A Museum

Imagine building a museum. The levels could house all your treasures. This could be carefully curated with labels and descriptions. What will your museum have in it?

Hospital

Imagine building a multi-story hospital. It could have wards, a car park, ambulance bays etc.

School

Design a school with classrooms and a playground. Perhaps there is a garden. Is there a nursery attached?

A Theme Park

Design a theme park with slides, rides and stalls.

An Airport

Build a bustling airport. Where will the planes land? Will there be shops, passport control and lounges?



A Shopping Mall

Imagine lots of different places to buy things from. Perhaps there is a place to eat as well.

The Construction Site

Lots of diggers, vehicles, bricks etc. will help create this theme. There could be cranes, roadways and even a café. Think about the signs you may see on a building site.

The Farm

A lovely rural theme, complete with animals, stables, a farmhouse, a barn, a pond, fields and so much more.

Fairy Tale Land

Where would the three bears live? Who lives in a castle? Is there a bridge for the Trolls and the billy goats?



These are just a few ideas. Where will your imagination take you?







Please Note that the locations we have chosen to illustrate are merely ideas as to how the play could unfold. They are not prescriptive recipe cards to be strictly adhered to. The children will have their own ideas and suggestions. They will lead the adventures through their own imaginations. These ideas are more for illustrative purposes to show what is possible from this open-ended resource.

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Original Idea by Alice Sharp, Experiential Play

Edited by Catherine L Clark and Kamilla-Rose Jawed-Rogers

Designed by Suzannah Hayes

Special thanks to everyone in the Innovations Team



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