

## Deconstructive Play

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Podcast: Loose Parts Nature Play

FB Group: Loose Parts Play, Loose Parts Learning

Book: Loose Parts Learning in K-3 Classrooms

**Deconstruct:** tear, rip, crumble, break, dismantle, undo, disband, dissolve, fold, bend, poke, stretch, unravel, crush, shred, smear, pick apart, destroy, disassemble, rearrange, reconfigure, modify, smoosh, smash, liquify, bend, blend, unwrap, unwind, pound, pluck

**Being destructive for the child in a play context is just as much about tearing up old ideas and notions as it is about tearing up a leaf into tiny, tiny strips...and both should be encouraged.**

**–Marc Armitage**

**WHY?** Sensory input and play, building understanding and properties of materials, nature is the ultimate natural destroyer/recycler, cause/effect, develop curiosity, STEM connections, flexible thinking, fine motor skills, emotional regulation

### Natural Items for Deconstruction

Clay (dried is okay too!)

Seeds—milkweed, cattail, sunflower heads, dried beans in shells, dent corn, dandelions, gourds, pumpkins, jewelweed and impatiens (exploding seeds!)

Fresh or dried herbs

Whole spices

Fresh or dried flowers, plant stems the year after (stinging nettle and milkweed=neat fibers)

Fallen leaves

Ice, Snow (can freeze something in ice)

Decomposing logs, old bark, soft wood, sticks

Baked egg shells

Kindling, tinder, pine needles, leaves, and sticks for fire exploration

### Manufactured Items for Deconstruction

Paper—packing paper, origami paper, paper shreds, newspaper, tissue paper

Old magazines

Fabric, stitching, knitted or crocheted materials

Playdough

Cardboard in all its varieties!

Old appliances (cut off cord), keyboard

Old toys, bicycles

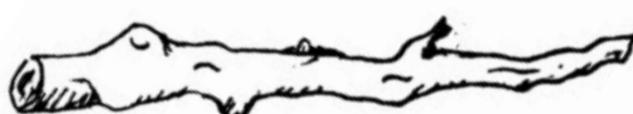
Blocks/wrecking ball

Sidewalk chalk

LEGO bricks, Plus Plus, Brain Flakes, etc.—put together and take apart

Recyclables, bubble wrap

Piano!



## Tools for Deconstruction

Wooden or rubber mallets, golf tees  
Scissors  
Rocks, bricks  
Mortar and pestle, rasp, garlic press, potato masher, graters, nut cracker, veggie peeler  
Tweezers, tongs, flyswatters  
Magnifying glasses  
Hands, feet  
Buckets, collecting bags  
Catapult, wrecking ball, trebuchet  
Playdough  
Bean bags  
Dissection kit  
Salt and water  
Matches, tin cans with holes near the bottom, heat for fire making  
Take apart tools—hammers, screw drivers, pliers

## Tips and Safety Measures

1. Share parameters. Teach respect and boundaries as needed.
2. Take it outside—more space, less messy and so many more benefits!
3. Reserve time for cleanup.
4. Gather materials responsibly. Use fallen items on the ground.
5. Ask for permission if it's okay to deconstruct or pick items.
6. Use appropriate safety gear and procedures, safety goggles, designated space, supervision, etc., depending on the activity.
7. Deconstruct your own creations, not someone else's work.

**Related Concepts:** transformation schema, reconstruction, reverse engineering play, composting, glaciers, erosion

**Cautions:** Living things, safety

## Read Aloud and Related Books:

Salad Pie—Wendy BooydeGraaff  
Today We Will Play—Chelsey Bahe  
Wreck this Journal—Keri Smith  
Beautiful Oops!—Barney Saltzberg  
Perfect Square—Michael Hall  
Anywhere Artists—Nikki Slade Robinson



## Resources:

Loose Parts Nature Play: Destructive Play podcast episode  
<https://loosepartsnatureplay.libsyn.com/destructive-play>

Tinkergarten: Why the Power of Destruction is Really Good for Kids  
<https://tinkergarten.com/blog/why-destroying-stuff-is-good-for-our-kids>