

Early Excellence
Product Care &
Safety Guidance
2016



Getting the most from your product

Thank you for your custom. To help you to get the most from your product we have produced this guide which contains useful tips, advice and general safety information about your purchase.

At Early Excellence we work hard to provide our customers with products of the highest possible standard which meet the learning and developmental needs of children. We have a specialist, highly experienced and qualified team that carefully select all our furniture and resources. It is important to remind all our customers that they have a legal obligation to be aware of and to comply with EYFS requirements and current health and safety legislation.

When working with children, practitioners should remember that babies and very young children have less life experience than older children and may not see and understand the consequences of their actions related to hazards and risks during their play. It is therefore the responsibility of the practitioner in the school/setting to select suitable resources that are age, stage and developmentally appropriate. The practitioner must consider the environment they will be used in, the needs of the children and staffing levels – which take into account experience and qualifications of staff and other carers.

We hope that you find this guidance useful in helping you to make the most of your purchases. Please contact us if you require any further assistance or advice.

Please note that the resources and products are intended to support children's learning and development and are not supplied by Early Excellence as toys.

To ensure our products are as innovative as possible, we make the following basic assumptions:

1

Our resources are for use in managed day-care and educational environments only (not for home use).

2

Children access resources when supported by qualified practitioners or other competent adults.

3

Appropriate staffing levels are in place for the specific environment and circumstances.

4

Schools and settings select resources that are age, stage and developmentally appropriate for the children who will access them and the environment in which they are to be used.

5

Regular monitoring for condition of furniture, resources and the environment is carried out.

6

Removal, repair or replacement of items that are worn, damaged or may present a hazard is part of normal procedure.

7

Suitable and sufficient Risk Assessments are carried out in line with EYFS and Health & Safety requirements. Very young children and children with specific needs must be supported appropriately.

8

Indoor and outdoor areas are well organised and tidy to avoid unnecessary trips and falls.

9

Application of best practice principles, including observational assessment, is used to monitor and respond to children's use of resources.

10

Behaviour is monitored and responded to in line with the setting's behaviour policy and Ofsted guidance and expectations.

Making best use of your product



Natural Materials for Indoor & Outdoor

Natural materials offer great experiences with a rich variety of colour, texture, weight and shape but do require more TLC. By their very nature these materials will change over time in appearance and texture as they naturally mature and age. Natural materials will absorb moisture which may release some of their colouring or dye. It is part of the natural process for wood, including mud kitchens, to twist, split or crack, for grain to rise, bark or outer covering to come off – the weave or structure of baskets may also work free.

Care & Maintenance

It is important to look after these resources to obtain the best from them and to prolong their life. Store natural materials in a cool airy place. Avoid submersion in water or locating in damp environments for prolonged periods of time. Allow drying slowly in a well-ventilated and not overly hot or dry environment and regularly assess for changes. Raised grain and chipped edges can be sanded down using fine grade sandpaper.



Large Outdoor Equipment

Outdoor equipment and resources have been selected for their suitability and durability under suitable weather conditions and sensible management. The nature of outdoor play is such that resources may have a shorter life span and so will need to be replaced more frequently. Children's play may be livelier and more vigorous outdoors and they are likely to take more risks. It is the adult's role and responsibility to do everything that is reasonably practical to ensure children's safety at all times. Play crates, planks and poles offer excellent learning opportunities but children must be taught how to use them safely and appropriately.

Care & Maintenance

These resources should not be submerged in wet mud, sand or water for long periods of time.



Man-made Materials & Recycled Resources

These resources may not change much in colour or appearance but will need to be checked regularly for wear and tear. Plastic resources will change over time and when subjected to heat, sun or very low temperatures may become brittle and break more easily.

Use of recycled materials and resources need careful consideration and discussion including information about the source of the materials and previous usage.

Early Excellence recognises that tyres are a versatile resource for outdoor play environments. We recommend that schools and settings carry out full and detailed risk assessments when using tyres or other recycled resources and materials. It is the school's and setting's responsibility to make a professional judgement about the usefulness and appropriateness of these resources which is balanced against the level of risk and the controls that can be put in place.

Many items in this section including role play clothing may be flammable. Items should be kept away from sources of ignition such as hot surfaces and naked flames.

Care & Maintenance

Man-made materials can be cleaned by submerging in warm water with washing-up liquids or sprayed with a food grade antibacterial product.

Water play resources such as tubes and cylinders will need to be kept clean by using food grade sterilising solution. Soft resources such as drapes, pillows and cushions should be kept dry and cleaned appropriately following manufacturer's instructions if available. Items that hold water should be emptied after use so that in very cold weather they do not freeze which could cause them to split. Plastic items used outdoors may develop rough or sharp edges which can also be sanded down using fine grade sand paper. Allow these resources to dry naturally avoiding contact with hot surfaces.



Using Sand & Soil

Some of our resources will be used outdoors with sand, soil and mud. These substances may contain hidden hazards such as bacteria, fertiliser, waste products or small/sharp items which could cause harm or infection. To minimise the risks to children, basic hygiene controls must be in place such as hand washing and visual checks of the area.



Indoor Furniture

Most of our furniture is constructed from wood or porous material with a wood veneer. When locating or relocating our furniture it must be moved and handled correctly. Please be aware our furniture is heavy and should not be moved by one person. Arrange for at least two people to lift furniture holding sides not shelves while using best practice manual handling techniques and procedures.

Our furniture unit range is designed to be static once in place. These units have either a straight or winged side. The winged units are designed to stand on their own. The straight units must not be used on their own. The back of the straight units must sit up against another substantial unit or be placed against a wall. These units have a safety notice on the back which is a reminder to staff and should not be removed.

Assembly

Most of our range will be delivered already assembled. Items such as deckchairs, water and sand trays may need to be assembled. Carefully follow the assembly and maintenance instructions that are provided with the item. If the product includes small parts such as screws, nuts or washers you must ensure that they are securely in place at all times.

Care & Maintenance

If cared for and used appropriately our furniture will last for many years.

It should be kept clean, dry and free from staples and hooks. If furniture is left standing in damp or wet conditions it will absorb moisture and the wood will expand and crack. Rubber feet are available and can be supplied to raise furniture off the floor if it is to be located in a wet area. The feet can be fitted by our experienced drivers on delivery. Our indoor furniture is not designed for use outdoors.



Wheeled Resources

Tricycles, barrows and prams are very popular. Children will naturally want to sit in and ride on these which is appropriate use for some wheeled equipment but not others such as dolls' prams. Please ensure you select equipment that is suitable for the age/stage and ability of your children and adapt use accordingly. Ensure clear agreed boundaries are in place about how and where equipment is used which all staff follow while supporting children's play.

Care & Maintenance

Prior to use, checks should be made to ensure that wheels, tyres, steering, pedals, locking mechanisms and any braking systems are free from defects. All securing nuts, bolts, screws and rivets are in place and tight.



Tools & Equipment

Staff should have a practical working knowledge of how to use these items safely to enable them to effectively support children's developing skills and understanding when using this type of equipment. Steps need to be taken to ensure that sharp and pointed items do not come into contact with face and eyes. When using saws, hammers and nails children should be taught how to use these safely by using a vice or pliers to avoid close body contact with face, hands and fingers.

Care & Maintenance

Pointed and sharp items such as gardening, woodworking, tools and other equipment need extra attention for care, storage and use. They must always be kept in good condition. Cutting equipment that has become blunt is more likely to cause injury than equipment that is fit for purpose and used safely and correctly. Handles must be secure.



Artefacts

Artefacts are unique resources and intended to be used for specific purposes and in special ways. They are selected as a provocation to stimulate children's thinking, wonder and enquiry. Many of these objects will be delicate and so need careful handling. Consideration needs to be made to the age and stage of development of the children. They are not intended for general daily use or to be used independently without the support of a suitably trained adult.

Care & Maintenance

Delicate items should be stored in a way and place that avoids damage. All artefacts should be checked and monitored before and during use. Damaged items should be removed and replaced.

Statutory Rights: This guidance does not affect your statutory rights. Every effort is made to provide durable products, however, they will naturally deteriorate over time with use.

Ethical Statement: Objects and artefacts from the natural world are intriguing and inspiring to young children. Early Excellence endeavours to source these materials from suppliers who have a commitment to ethical and sustainable manufacturing, farming and mining processes.



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