

Non-stereotypical, Multicultural, and Real Items

Ensuring that early learning classrooms reflect the diverse world we live in helps young children to develop healthy self-concepts, to accept individual differences, and to build the foundation of future soft skills like teamwork and empathy. Young children are highly impressionable, and within these formative years, teachers can work to encourage respect for diversity in group settings through the learning environment and classroom materials. Using real items and multicultural, non-stereotypical materials helps children have authentic, hands-on experiences and make connections to their own lives as they make sense of new concepts and ideas.

Non-stereotypical and Culturally Sensitive

Multiculture refers to people of many different nationalities and cultures. Using multicultural and non-stereotypical items in the classroom can help children feel strong and proud about who they are. Learning about the diversity in the world helps children appreciate cultures that may differ from their own.

Stereotypes are defined as fixed ideas about a particular group of people or things. Ways to counteract stereotypes include reading books and other materials showing people in many different roles and abilities. For example, reading a book about community helpers that illustrates women as firefighters, men as nurses, or a person in a wheelchair as a crossing guard can show that role models are not limited by gender or ability.

Examples of multicultural and non-stereotypical items include the following:

Center	Infants (0–17 months)	Toddler–School Age (18 months–12 years)
Manipulatives	Puzzles depicting varying cultures, ethnicities, or abilities	Puzzles depicting varying cultures, ethnicities, or abilities Games played by varying cultures
Dramatic Play	Dolls depicting varying cultures, ethnicities, or abilities Clothes or garments from varying cultures	Dolls depicting varying cultures, ethnicities, or abilities Clothes or garments from varying cultures
Library	Books, magazines, or menus depicting varying cultures, ethnicities, or abilities Puppets depicting varying cultures, ethnicities, or abilities	Books, magazines, or menus depicting varying cultures, ethnicities, or abilities Puppets depicting varying cultures, ethnicities, or abilities
Music	Musical instruments from varying cultures Music playing from varying cultures or languages	Musical instruments from varying cultures Music playing from varying cultures or languages
Blocks	Block play people depicting varying cultures, ethnicities, or abilities	Block play people depicting varying cultures, ethnicities, or abilities

Real Items

Real items provide concrete examples for understanding vocabulary and other learning concepts. These items are reflective of the world children live in and are commonly used in everyday life. Replicas of real items are not counted, such as fake plants (a replica of a living plant), paper crumpled to resemble rocks, and “child-sized” real items (a short mop and broom). Many real items can be easily obtained by enlisting the help of families in providing items, such as empty food containers, broken appliances, and outgrown clothes. Although it is easiest to incorporate real items into a dramatic play center, there are many ways these items can be incorporated into numerous centers in the classroom.

Examples of real items include the following:

Center	Infants (0–17 months)	Toddler—School Age (18 months–12 years)
Dramatic Play	Empty food boxes or containers Hats, scarves Old cell phones, cordless phone Wooden spoons or spatulas	Oven mitt, pot holders, tablecloth Pots, pans, pitchers Hair dryer, remotes, camera Vests, gloves, jewelry, ties
Manipulatives	Large bottles with twist caps Homemade lock/latch board	Yarn with thread spools Muffin tin with buttons
Art/Sensory	Egg cartons, coffee filters Newspapers, magazines Fabric swatches	Popsicle sticks, paint rollers, Q-Tips Foil, lace, yarn Stapler, Scotch tape, painter’s tape
Library	Class-made books Magazines, newspapers, menus	Class-made books Magazines, newspapers, menus
Science/Discovery	Large seashells Feathers Measuring cups Sensory bottles	Plants, aquarium, flowers in a vase Birdseed, beans, rice, flour Pinecones, rocks, bark Rulers, gloves
Music	Maracas, tambourines Scarves to dance with	CD or tape player (they can access) Scarves to dance with Keyboard, guitar, recorder
Writing	Not applicable	Clipboards, staplers, typewriter Stationery, hole punch, stamps Greeting cards, whiteboards, planners

Note: A Texas Rising Star mentor can provide a more detailed list of real items.

For more information about indoor interest areas or items to include, visit [the Texas Rising Star Digital Resource Collection](#).