Low cost materials for learning centres – Educational corners

Stefanie De Vos

& Elisabeth Laplanche

This booklet will give you an overview on educational corners, corner arrangement and materials found in different corners.

It will explain how materials for activities in the different corners can be made with low-cost materials. We really hope this little manual will inspire you to apply them.

We believe the use of this booklet will be beneficial for the children's development on the one hand, and will help teachers to manage an early childhood class on the other.

Inhoud

1. Educational corners

Why corners?

Young children learn the most by **playing** with educational materials. They will learn more through play than by being taught on an academic way.

Young children will learn the most when they are **experimenting on their own**. When there are different corners in your classroom, the children will be able to experiment with whatever they want. By doing this, they can develop **different skills at the same time** and they can choose for different activities at the same time. This means that every child can develop on their **own level** and **pace**.

Arranging the class in corners

The number of corners in one classroom

There are different factors to take into account while deciding about the number of corners in your classroom. It will **depend** on the **size of the classroom**, the **available space** and the **number of children** in your class.

- If you have a big classroom, you can easily make six or eight corners.

- If you share a classroom with one of the grades of primary school, you can't make a lot of permanent corners so you better decide to make some mobile corners. These could be boxes with materials per learning area (f.e. language box, mathematics box, …) and can be used on the desks in the classroom.

- If you have a really small classroom, you just make three or four corners and you can use the circle as an extra corner while the children are playing in the corners.

  NOTE:
  It's better not to offer all the different corners at the same time. Just switch the corners once in a while when you see the children need something else or something new.

Which corners are situated next to each other

The arrangement of the different corners in the classroom is very important. For example: you better don't place a noisy corner such as the kitchen corner next to a quiet corner like the rest corner.

Some corners should be located close to each other, like a shop corner and a kitchen corner. It stimulates the role play between the corners.

New materials in an educational corner

When you make new materials for one of the corners, always explain how to use the material in the circle first. You even show them a short demonstration. After this, the purpose of the material will be clear and the children will be able to play with the material on a correct way.

2. Examples of educational corners

Kitchen corner/home corner	= a corner where children can do role play. They pretend like they are a realistic or fantastic figure. f.e.: a girl acts as if she's cooking nshima, she's playing with the children, etc. f.e.: a boy plays with his children, he is carrying the baby on his back using a chitenge
Expressive arts corner	
Art and design	= a corner where children are stimulated to create, to draw, to use a pair of scissors, to paint, to colour, … They learn how to use a pencil.
Physical education	= a corner where children develop their gross and fine motor skills by moving in different ways. They get fit by exercising, they exercise physical skills. Also manipulative skills are acquired.
Music corner	= a corner where children can explore with instruments (real ones or self-made) or with low cost materials (for example paper, plastic bottles, wooden sticks, …)

Blocks corner	= a corner where children play and build with the blocks, make patterns, sort blocks (by colour, by shape), …
Shop corner	= a corner where children play role play. One child is a seller and one is a customer. They learn how to use money, how to interact with each other, …
Rest corner/cosy corner	= a corner where children can rest, explore with their senses, feel comfortable, …
Science corner	= a corner where children can explore with natural materials like leaves and branches, and materials around technology, physics, etc.
Mathematics corner	= a corner where children learn how to count, to solve problems, to measure things, to match and sort materials, …
Language corner	= a corner where children 'play' with the alphabet: they recognise the different letters and words.
Game / puzzle corner	= a corner containing different games and/or puzzles.

3. Materials in the different corners

3.1 Kitchen corner/home corner

3.1.1 Materials you can collect for this corner

Cooking materials
Brazier, fork, spoon, knife (not sharp!), cups, pots, pans, plates, etc. ***Make sure the kids can't hurt themselves or others with these utensils, for example by using plastic ones.***

Food materials
Empty packages of drinks (milk, water, juice, coffee, …) and foods (cans, boxes of cookies/cereal, bags of rice, sugar, flour, …)

Furniture
Beds, table, chairs, closet, stove

Doll stuff
Dolls, chitenges, clothes for the dolls

3.2 Arts corner

In the arts corner you can find different materials belonging to the different departments of art.
Those are: **Music**, **physical education** and **art and design**.

3.2.1 Materials you can collect for this corner

Music department

Shakers of different sizes, **bamboo sticks** (= drum sticks) where you can make music with, **patterns** that tell the children how they can play a rhythm, **paper and pencils** so they can make a rhythm themselves, …

NOTES:
1 You can make a music wall yourself by using pots, pans, empty bottles, other kitchen materials, and so on. The children can explore the different sounds of the materials by hitting them with their hands or small sticks.
2 You can buy instruments but you can easily make them yourself as well. Make sure the materials you make are strong so the children can play with them for a long time.

Physical education department

Any material that encourages the children to move and develop their fine and gross motor skills can be used in this corner.

F.e. Balls, skipping rope, cans or pins that can be tipped over, pegs, wrapper, hopscotch, rope, bean bags, a small net, balloons, taped patterns on the floor, hula hoops, …

Art and design department

Plane papers, pencils, crayons, paint, paint brushes, scissors, glue, markers, sketch books, clay, etc.

NOTE:
Don't offer all the different materials at the same time in the corner. Just choose some where the children can play and work with.

IN GENERAL:
You can only have one department in the expressive arts corner.

3.3 Blocks corner

3.3.1 Materials you can collect for this corner

Blocks (plastic or wooden), foam shapes, empty milk or juice cartons, yoghurt pots, toilet rolls, empty bottles, wooden sticks, bigger stones, …

3.3.2 Materials you can make for this corner

Box with shapes

What is this?

This is a cardboard box with holes in it in different shapes. The outlines of the shapes have different colours. The blocks you are using for this game have the same colours and shapes as the ones on the box. The children can take a block and put it in the box trough the right hole.

What do children learn?

- They learn different colours and shapes.
- They learn to match the blocks by colour and shape.

Link with the syllabus

Pre-mathematics – 3-4 years
0.1.1 Classification
0.1.1.1 Matching and sorting
0.1.1.1.2 Sort different objects
Sorting according to colour, size, shape
Pre-mathematics – 5-6 years
0.2.1 Classification
0.2.1.1 Group familiar objects according to their properties size, colour and shape
Comparing objects on the basis of size, colour and shape
0.2.5 Plain shapes
0.2.5.2 Shapes
0.2.5.2.1 Identify basic shapes

Identifying basic shapes (only circle, square, rectangle and triangle)

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

- Cardboard box
- Cutter knife
- Crayons
- Tape

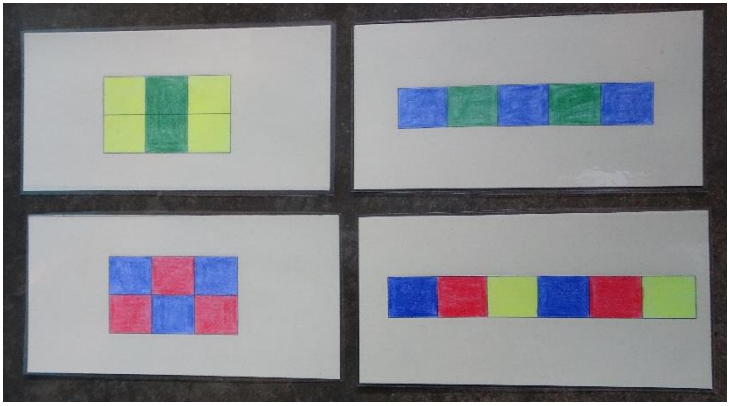
Steps:

STEP 1	Make holes in the box in the same shapes as the blocks. Use a cutter knife.
STEP 2	Mark the hole with the same colour as the shape.

Differentiation

- Use blocks which all have the same shape but different colours OR use blocks which all have the same colour but different shapes.

Patterns



What is this?

These are pictures or drawings that represent building blocks. The children have to build the same pattern as the one on the picture or drawing.

What do children learn?

- They learn how to follow a building 'plan'.
- They learn how to follow a pattern: f.e. red, green, red, green, …
- They learn how to 'read' the card – language skills.

Link with the syllabus

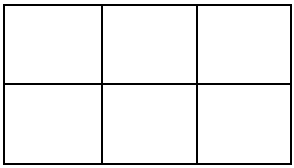
Pre-mathematics – 3-4 years
0.1.1 Classification
0.1.1.2 Patterns
0.1.1.2.1 Make patterns using different objects

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

- Plane paper
- Crayons
- Laminating sheets/ laminating machine OR cardboard boxes and tape

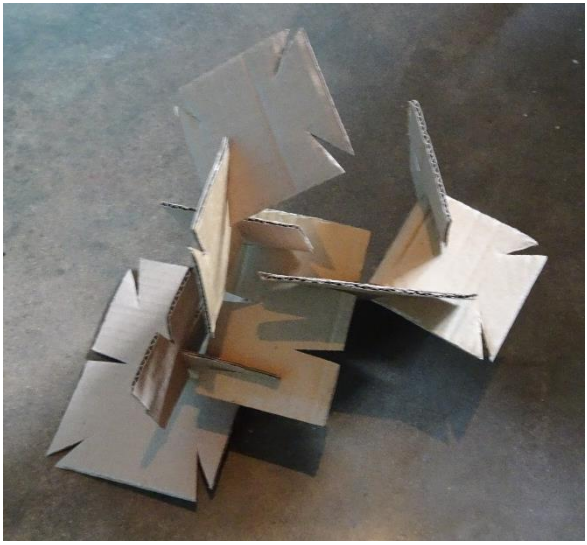
Steps:

STEP 1	Print or draw tables of squares next or above each other. F.e.  
STEP 2	Colour the squares by using a pattern. F.e. Blue, green, blue, green, …
STEP 3	Make sure all the papers with the patterns on are strong enough. You can glue the papers on a piece of thin cardboard (f.e. cereal boxes), or cut out the patterns and cover them with tape. If you have a laminator, you can laminate the papers.

Differentiation

- Make other patterns like figures: f.e. a person, a flower, etc.
- Give the children plane papers and let them draw a pattern themselves.

Cardboard blocks



What is this?

These are blocks in the shape of squares or rectangles. The blocks can have different sizes. A few slim V-shaped slits are made in each block. The children experiment how they can build a stable construction.

What do children learn?

- They learn critical and creative thinking.
- They will develop their fine motor skills.
- They will learn imaginative play.

Link with the syllabus

Language and literacy – 3-4 years
Term 1 – week 3
Pre-writing – handwriting
Demonstrate eye-hand coordination
Expressive arts – 5-6 years
0.2.5 art end crafts
0.2.5.1 drawing and colouring
0.2.5.1.6 play and construct structures
Constructing structures; shape building using duplos, legos e.g. blocks
0.2.6 motor development
0.2.6.1 eye hand and eye foot coordination
0.2.6.1.2 demonstrate eye hand and eye foot coordination activities
Coordinating of eye-hand and eye-foot activities.

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

- Sturdy cardboard
- Scissors

Steps:

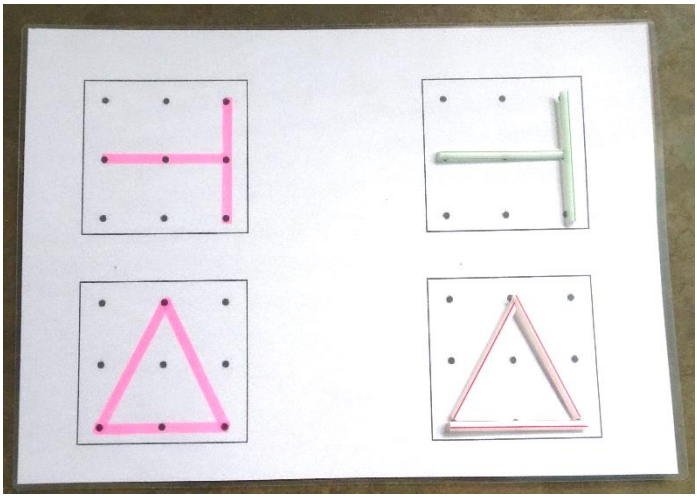
STEP 1	Cut the cardboard into squares or rectangles of different sizes (not too big)

STEP 2	Cut a few slim V-shaped slits on the corners or along the edges.

Differentiation

- Use different shapes for the blocks (f.e. triangle, circle)
- Make patterns for the children to use as an example.

Patterns with straws



What is this?

These are papers with pairs of raster figures on. On one of the raster figures you draw a pattern, while you leave the one next to it empty. Using straws, the children have to copy the pattern in the empty raster. They have to use the straws with the same length as on the example.

What do children learn?

- They learn how to read a pattern (language)
- Their visual skills are stimulated
- They learn to compare the different lengths (mathematics – measuring)

Link with the syllabus

Language and literacy – 3-4 years
Term 1 – week 3
Pre-writing – handwriting
Demonstrate eye-hand coordination
Pre-mathematics – 3-4 years
0.1.2 Classification
0.1.1.3 Patterns
0.1.1.2.1 Make patterns using different objects
Language and literacy – 5-6 years
Term 2 – week 10
Pre-writing: copy patterns/circular and straight
Pre-mathematics – 5-6 years
0.2.6 measurements
0.2.6.1 length and width
0.2.6.1.1 measure length and width of objects
Measuring length and width of concrete objects using non-standard units of measurements (using strings)

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

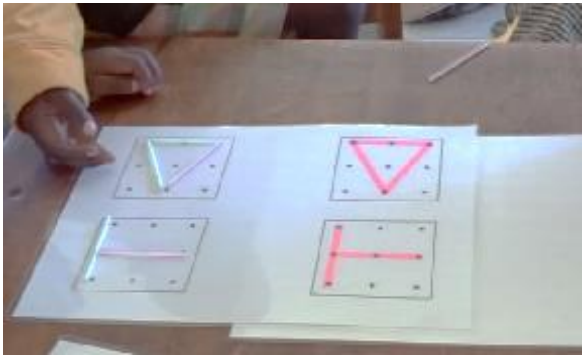
- Plane papers
- Straws
- Glue, cardboard and tape OR laminating sheets and laminator

Steps:

STEP 1	Make raster figures with dots (four squares on one page). You can do this with the computer or manually. You can find an example of the raster at the end of this book.
STEP 2	Draw patterns in the raster figures on the left.
STEP 3	Cut straws with the same length of all the lines that are used for the patterns.
STEP 4	Make the papers stronger by gluing them on a piece of thin cardboard (f.e. cereal boxes), cutting the patterns out and covering them with tape. If you have a laminator, you can laminate the papers.

Differentiation

- Make easy or difficult patterns.
- Make smaller or bigger patterns.
- You can use letters or numbers as patterns (language or mathematics development).
- Use other materials instead of straws. F.e. small wooden sticks, …



Road and cars

What is this?

These are papers with roads drawn on. The cars are made out of cardboard and a toilet roll.

What do children learn?

- The children will play role play, it stimulates their creativity.
- They learn to play together and to communicate: when someone is blocking the road, they will ask him/her to go out of the way.

Link with the syllabus

Social studies – 3-4 years

0.1.9 Transport

0.1.9.1 Types of transport

0.1.9.1.1 Mention common types of transport in the locality

Common types of transport: motor bike, car, bus, scotch, cart, train, boat, bicycle, canoe, etc.

0.1.9.2Road safety rules

0.1.9.2.1 Talk about road safety rules

Road safety rules: obey traffic lights, cross the road when it's clear, use Zebra Crossing, …

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

ROADS:

- Plane papers
- Crayons
- Tipp-Ex
- Glue, cardboard and tape OR laminating sheets and laminator

CARS

- Thin cardboard
- Crayons
- Tape
- Toilet rolls

Steps:

ROADS

STEP 1	Draw roads on the plane papers, make sure the roads all have the same width so the different papers fit together.
STEP 2	Colour the roads and make a white line in the middle of the roads with Tipp-Ex (you can also choose not to colour some pieces in the middle of the road.)
STEP 3	Make all the papers stronger by gluing them on a piece of thin cardboard (f.e. cereal boxes) and covering them with tape. If you have a laminator, you can laminate the papers.

CARS

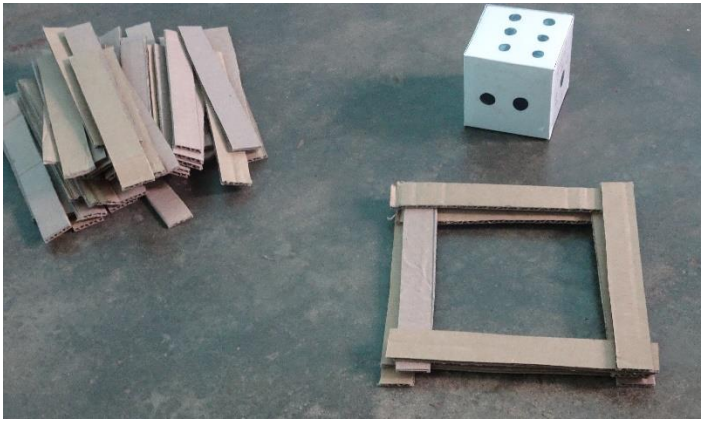
STEP 1	Draw a car on a thin piece of cardboard.
STEP 2	Cut out the car and colour it.
STEP 3	Tape the car.
STEP 4	Staple two cars on one toilet roll, each on another side.

Differentiation

- As an addition to the straight roads and curves, you can also make other things like a roundabout, sandy road, …
- Make not only cars but also bikes, persons, …
- Using the building blocks, the children can build houses next to the roads or they can build cars themselves.

NOTE:
You can tape the roads on the floor, otherwise they will move while the children are playing.

Dice with cardboard sticks



What is this?

This is a game to play with four children at the same time. Each child throws the dice at his/her turn and then takes the same number of cardboard sticks from the pile as the number on the dice. After taking them, they can lay the sticks in a square and build a tower as high as possible.

What do children learn?

- They learn how to count.
- They learn to build a tower in the shape of a square.
- They learn to follow the rules and play together

Link with the syllabus

Language and literacy – 3-4 years

Term 1 – week 3

Pre-writing – handwriting

Demonstrate eye-hand coordination

Pre-mathematics – 3-4 years

0.1.2 Number and notation

0.1.2.1 Counting

0.1.2.1.1 Count orally up to ten objects

Using concrete objects to count up to 10

Awareness of numeration system and number order

0.1.2.1.2 Identify number values up 1-5

Recognising number values of 1-5.

Expressive arts – 5-6 years

0.2.5 art end crafts

0.2.5.1 drawing and colouring

0.2.5.1.6 play and construct structures

Constructing structures; shape building using duplos, legos e.g. blocks

0.2.6 motor development

0.2.6.1 eye hand and eye foot coordination

0.2.6.1.2 demonstrate eye hand and eye foot coordination activities

Coordinating of eye-hand and eye-foot activities

Pre-mathematics – 5-6 years

0.2.2 Numbers

0.2.2.1 counting

0.2.2.1.1 Count orally up to 20 objects

Use concrete objects to count up to 20

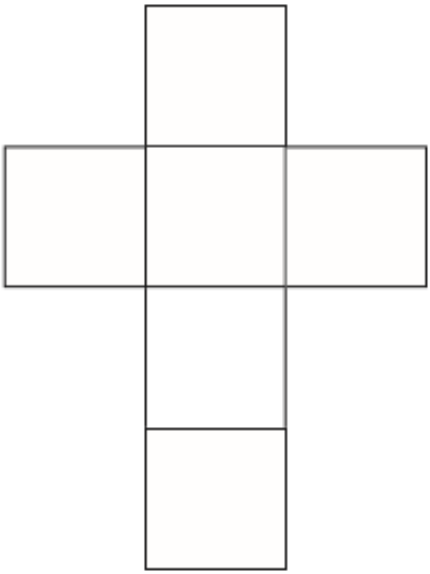
What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

- Sturdy cardboard (sticks)
- Thin cardboard (dice)
- Marker
- Tape

Steps:

STEP 1	Cut cardboard sticks of the same size (f.e.: 2x15 cm)
STEP 2	Make a dice with the symbols of the numbers one to six on it. *Draw six squares in the shape of a cross on a big piece of cardboard. Make sure the squares all have the same size. Then cut out the cross and fold it on the lines. Tape the sides together so it becomes a dice.*

	
STEP 3	Make the dice stronger by taping it.

Differentiation

- Add a coloured dice and coloured cardboard sticks.
- Use blocks instead of cardboard sticks and build a tower as high as possible.
- Let the children build a triangle tower or something else instead of a tower in the shape of a square.
- Use a dice with written numbers like 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 instead of dots.

3.4 Shop corner

3.4.1 Materials you can collect for this corner

Empty packages can be used for this corner, for example: Biscuits, sweets, soft drink bottles, milk cartons, tissues, lotion, cereal boxes, tooth paste, juice cartons, soap bar packages, egg cartons, …

NOTE:
It's not because you can use anything, you have to fill your shop with everything. Just choose some materials around a specific topic.
Make f.e. a soft drink shop, a pharmacist shop, a candy shop, a shop full of baby stuff, etc.

3.4.2 Materials you can make for this corner

Money

What is this?

These are papers where you write a number from one to ten on. Next to the number there are as many circles as the number. The children can use the papers (= the money) to pay for products in the shop corner. Make sure you mark each one of the products with a number and the circles as well.

What do children learn?

- The children learn how to count to five (younger toddlers) or ten (older toddlers).
- The children also learn to sort the materials and the money by numbers:
  The money has to be in the right part of the cash register.
  The products have to be in the right line.
- They learn social skills: they have to talk and interact with each other:
  Customer: 'Hello, I would like to have some tooth paste.'
  Seller: 'Here you go, that's five kwacha please.'

Link with the syllabus

Pre-mathematics – 3-4 years
0.1.2 Number and notation
0.1.2.1 Counting

0.1.2.1.3 Use numerals 1-5 to symbolise quantities of objects.
Recognising of number symbols/numerals 1-5.
Identification of number symbols.

Pre-mathematics – 5-6 years

0.2.2 Numbers
0.2.2.1 Counting
0.2.2.2.2 Use numerals 1-20 to symbolize quantities of objects
Ordening numbers 1 to 10.

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

- Plane papers
- Marker
- Laminating sheets/ laminator OR cardboard boxes and tape
- Scissors

Steps:

STEP 1	Divide several papers in 8 pieces.
STEP 2	Cut out the pieces.
STEP 3	Write a number from one to ten on the paper and draw as many circles as the number.

STEP 4	Make all the papers stronger by gluing them on a piece of thin cardboard (f.e. cereal boxes), cutting them out and covering them with tape. If you have a laminator, you can laminate the papers.

Differentiation

- You can make coins as well.

Cash register

What is this?

This is a box where the children (sellers) can sort the money in.

What do children learn?

- The children learn to count to five (younger toddlers) or ten (older toddlers).
- The children also learn to sort the money by numbers: the money has to be in the right part of the cash register.

Link with the syllabus

Pre-mathematics – 3-4 years

0.1.2 Number and notation

0.1.2.1 Counting

0.1.2.1.3 Use numerals 1-5 to symbolise quantities of objects.

Recognising of number symbols/numerals 1-5.

Identification of number symbols.

Pre-mathematics – 5-6 years

0.2.2 Numbers

0.2.2.1 Counting

0.2.2.2.2 Use numerals 1-20 to symbolize quantities of objects

Ordening numbers 1 to 10.

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

- Cardboard boxes
- Paper OR paint OR crayons
- Tape
- Marker
- Strong glue
- Scissors

Steps:

STEP 1	Search for a small cardboard box (height: maximum 10 cm).
STEP 2	Decorate the cardboard box outside (with paper, paint, …).
STEP 3	Make the box stronger by putting tape all around the box (on the outside).
STEP 4	Make pieces of cardboard to divide the box in six to ten compartments.
STEP 5	Fold the pieces and glue them inside the box.
STEP 6	Write the numbers and circles of each compartment on the inside, on the bottom of the box.

Differentiation

- Make more compartments for paper money and coins.

3.5 Rest corner/cosy corner

3.5.1 Materials you can collect for this corner

Blankets, puppets, dolls, matrasses, pillows, stories, kamishibai, bean bags …

3.5.2 Materials you can make for this corner

Touching wall

What is this?

This is a wall with different items glued onto. The items have different textures. The children can touch the

different items and feel them, so they can enjoy using their senses.

What do children learn?

- The children learn to touch intensely
- They also learn to use their touch sense
- The children learn to calm down, to be quiet
- They learn something about the texture of the different items: soft, hard, rough, flexible, …

Link with the syllabus

Language and literacy – 3-4 years
Term 1 – week 2
Pre-writing – handwriting
Demonstrate finger manipulation (finger flexing, …)
Environmental science – 3-4 years
0.1.1 The human body
0.1.1.1 External parts of the body
0.1.1.1.2 'Talk' about the functions of the external parts of the body.
Observing the functions of the external parts of the body
Awareness of one's body parts

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

- All kind of low cost materials that children can touch: plastic bags, an old slipper, rocks, caps, egg cartons, old chitenge fabric, sponges, etc.
- Strong glue
- Scissors
- Cardboard
- Papers
- Tape

Steps:

STEP 1	Look for a nice piece of cardboard (not too small)
STEP 2	You can cover the cardboard with a light coloured paper or you can just stick everything directly onto the cardboard If you cover it, you have to tape it as well
STEP 3	Glue all your materials on the cardboard. Make sure they are not too close to each other
STEP 4	Let the glue dry for at least a night.

Differentiation

- Let one or more children wear a blindfold.
- Hang bags filled with different materials on the wall, the (blindfolded) children can feel inside the bags and guess what's in them

Shakers

What is this?

These are self-made music instruments where they can make sounds with by shaking them. The children enjoy making and hearing the sounds.

What do children learn?

- The children develop listening skills.
- They also learn to make rhythms, they learn to create their own music.
- They learn that different materials make different sounds

Link with the syllabus

Language and literacy – 3-4 years
Term 1 – week 1
Pre-reading – sounds
Identify sounds made by different objects (shakers, drums, …)

Term 1 – week 2
Pre-reading – sounds
Identify sounds made by different musical instruments.
Environmetal science – 5-6 years
0.2.2 The human body
0.2.2.1 Parts of the body
0.2.2.1.2 Mention functions of the different external parts of the body
Functions of different external parts of the body. Hearing-ears, seeing-eyes.

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

- Plastic bottles
- Different things to fill the shakers with: uncooked rice, maize or beans, rocks, …
- Tape

Steps:

STEP 1	First of all: clean the plastic bottles very well. When they're dry, you can fill them with materials.
STEP 2	Make sure the bottles are closed very well with tape so the children can't open them.

NOTE:
You can make the shakers in different ways. You can use plastic bottles but you can also use other materials or extra materials.

Differentiation

- Make patterns with the different shakers so the children can make a melody themselves
- Give the children empty bottles and some materials so they can make a shaker themselves
- Make bottles where the children can't see through. Fill 2 bottles with rocks, 2 bottles with sand, 2 bottles with … The children have to search by using their sense of hearing which bottles have the same content

Shinny bottles

What is this?

These are plastic bottles filled with materials such as sand, shredded paper, uncooked beans, etc. Between those materials there are some eye-catching things in the bottles. The children have to look for those eye-catchers (with the bottles still closed). They will be focused, concentrated and calm.

What do children learn?

- The children learn to watch intensely.
- They will develop their visual skills.
- They learn to calm down and be quiet

Link with the syllabus

Environmental science – 3-4 years
0.1.2 The human body
0.1.2.1 External parts of the body
0.1.1.1.2 'Talk' about the functions of the external parts of the body.
Observing the functions of the external parts of the body
Awareness of one's body parts
Environmetal science – 5-6 years
0.2.2 The human body
0.2.2.1 Parts of the body
0.2.2.1.2 Mention functions of the different external parts of the body

Functions of different external parts of the body. Hearing-ears, seeing-eyes.

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

- Transparent plastic bottles
- Sand OR uncooked beans OR maize OR rice OR shredded paper OR …
- Shiny things: crown caps, shiny papers, pearls, coloured papers, etc.

Steps:

STEP 1	Fill the plastic bottles with sand or uncooked beans or maize or rice or papers nippers.
STEP 2	Put SOME (not too many) shiny papers, crown caps, pearls or coloured papers in the bottles as well. Don't put them all together.
STEP 3	Make sure the bottles are closed very well with tape so the children can't open them.

Differentiation

- Make a set of cards with on each card a drawing of one of the objects hidden in the bottles. Give each child one or a few cards, they then have to look for the bottle containing the object on their card(s).

Surprise box

What is this?

This is a big cardboard box filled with paper scraps and a few bigger and smaller (not too small) objects such as blocks, caps, foam shapes, etc. You can change the objects as a teacher according to the topic you're teaching about. A few holes are made in the cardboard box (bigger and smaller ones), the children can put their hands or arms

through them to look for the objects. When they've found one, they can take it out.

What do children learn?

- The children learn how to touch intensely
- They learn to focus on their touching skills
- The fine motor skills will be developed (hand coordination)
- The children learn how to solve problems: '**How can I take this big block out of the box?**' (they have to search for a bigger hole on another side of the box)

Link with the syllabus

Environmental science – 3-4 years
0.1.3 The human body
0.1.3.1 External parts of the body
0.1.1.1.2 'Talk' about the functions of the external parts of the body.
Observing the functions of the external parts of the body
Awareness of one's body parts

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

- A big cardboard box
- Scissors or knife (to cut the holes)

- Glue
- Light coloured papers
- Paper scraps (newspapers)
- Blocks, caps, … to put into the box

Steps:

STEP 1	Cover the cardboard box with light coloured papers
STEP 2	Cut a few holes in the box (big and smaller ones)
STEP 3	Make the box stronger by putting tape all around the box (on the outside)
STEP 4	Put the shredded paper and the materials inside the box. Close the box on top

Differentiation

- Make cards with a picture or a drawing of the objects in the box. Let the children pick a card before they start to feel inside the box. Now they have to search (by touching) what's on their card.

Sniffy bags

What is this?

These are small bags filled with something that has a smell. The children can sniff the bags, it relaxes them.

What do children learn?

- The children learn to use their sense of smell. This is a sense that is not used very often and it's hard to develop this very well.
- They learn to compare different smells and to appreciate them.

Link with the syllabus

Environmental science – 3-4 years
0.1.4 The human body
0.1.4.1 External parts of the body

0.1.1.1.2 'Talk' about the functions of the external parts of the body
Observing the functions of the external parts of the body
Awareness of one's body parts

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

- A piece of fabric or chitenge (can be an old one)
- Some materials that smell: teabag, spices, bar of soap, dried flowers, perfume, etc.

Steps:

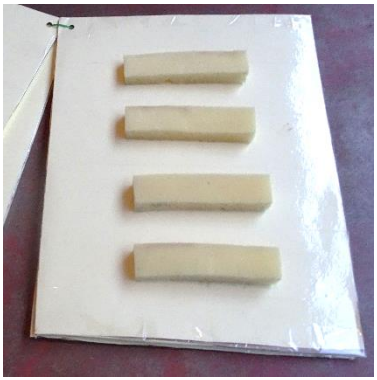
STEP 1	Cut six circular pieces out of the chitenge. (diameter: 25 cm)
STEP 2	Lay the material that smells in the middle of the piece of fabric.
STEP 3	Button up the piece of chitenge with the material in it.

Differentiation

- Make the sniffy bags in pairs: make two bags with a teabag, two bags with a bar of soap, etc. The children have to search for the two matching bags.

Touching books






What is this?

These are books with materials in them which have different textures. The children can touch the different materials in the books.

What do children learn?

- The children learn to touch intensely.
- They also learn to use their sense 'touching'
- The children learn to calm down, to be quiet
- They learn something about the texture of the different items: soft, hard, rough, flexible, …

Link with the syllabus

Language and literacy – 3-4 years
Term 1 – week 2
Pre-writing – handwriting
Demonstrate finger manipulation (finger flexing, …)
Environmental science – 3-4 years
0.1.5 The human body
0.1.5.1 External parts of the body
0.1.1.1.2 'Talk' about the functions of the external parts of the body.
Observing the functions of the external parts of the body
Awareness of one's body parts

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

- All kind of low cost materials that children can touch: plastic bags, an old slipper, rocks, old chitenge fabric, Styrofoam, sponges, …

NOTE:
If you make a touching wall and touching books, then use different materials!

- Strong glue
- Cardboard
- Tape
- Light coloured paper

Steps:

STEP 1	Cut (for each book) four to six pieces of cardboard. The pieces have to have the same size
STEP 2	Cover the cardboard with a light coloured paper
STEP 3	Tape the covered cardboards to make them stronger
STEP 4	Glue all the different materials in the book. Use one material per 'page'

Differentiation

- Let the children wear a blindfold while touching the materials in the book.

3.6 Science corner / Explore corner

3.6.1 Materials you can collect for this corner

A box with **water and materials**: the children learn which materials float and which ones sink.
Nature elements f.e. rocks, leaves, little wooden sticks, …
A box with **ground**: the children can learn how to plant or sow seeds. You don't have to use real seeds for this corner, you can teach them the action of sowing and planting by using uncooked beans.
A box with **empty bottles and caps:** the children match the right cap with the right bottle.

NOTES:
1. Don't offer all those different possibilities at the same time in your class. Just choose one at a time.
2. You can also put another material in an empty box which fits with the topic you are teaching about.
F.e. if you are teaching about the topic 'bathing' you can make a box with water, foam and sponges. The children will love it!

3.7 Mathematics corner

3.7.1 Materials you can collect for this corner

Counting necklaces, counting games, shapes or caps of different colours to sort, number dices, etc.

NOTES:

1 You can easily combine the mathematics corner with the blocks corner.

2 For more information about materials for the mathematics corner, check

VVOB. Katholiek onderwijs Vlaanderen. Odisee. (2015). *Low-cost materials for Pre-math.* VVOB.

3.8 Language corner

3.8.1 Materials you can collect for this corner

Books, kamishibai, posters of the letters, alphabet puzzle, pre-writing dice, pre-writing coins, dancing ribbons [1], …

3.8.2 Materials you can make for this corner

Mango Tree

What is this?

[1] For more information about these materials check: Melkebeke, L. & Clottemans, S. (2015). *Low cost materials: for language development. VVOB.*

Every child gets a tree and mangos ('coins' with the vowels on). Make a dice with one of the vowels (a, e, i, o, u) on each side and one blank side.
The children have to throw the dice at their turn. When a child throws an 'a' for example, he/she takes a mango (coin) with an 'a' on it and puts it on the tree. When a child throws the blank side, he/she has to skip his/her turn.
The first child whose mango tree is full, wins the game.

What do children learn?

- The children learn to recognise the different vowels
- The children pronounce the different vowels during the game
- They learn to wait for their turn and to follow the rules

Link with the syllabus

Language and literacy – 3-4 years
Pre-reading – sounds
Term 1 – week 6/8 → sound out 'a'
Term 1 – week 9/10 → sound out 'e'
Term 1 – week 11 → sound out 'o'
Term 2 – week 1 → sound out 'o'
Term 2 – week 2/3 → sound out 'u'
Term 2 – week 4/5 → sound out 'i'
Language and literacy – 5-6 years
Term 1 – week 1

Pre-reading – sound out letters (/a/, /e/) (/e/, /i/) (/i/, /o/) (/o/, /u/)

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

- Cardboard boxes
- Scissors
- Crayons
- Marker
- Glue

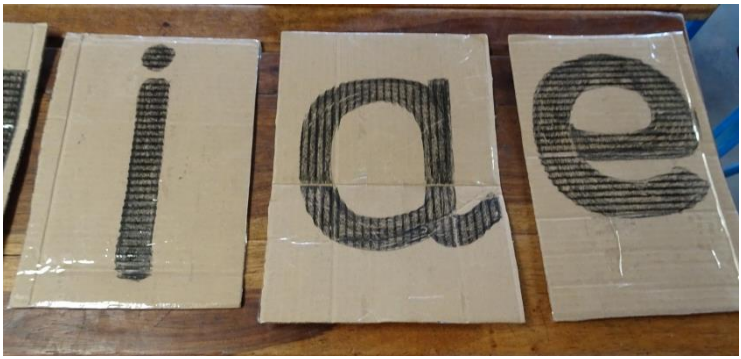
Steps:

STEP 1	Cut the shape of a tree out of the cardboard box
STEP 2	Cut the shapes of mangos out of the cardboard (15 mangos for each tree)
STEP 3	Colour the tree in green and brown. Colour the mangos in orange, red or yellow.
STEP 4	Write the vowels on the trees (3 x a,e,i,o,u) Write the vowels on the mangos (3 x a,e,i,o,u)
STEP 5	Make a dice and write the vowels on the dice. *Check 'dice with cardboard sticks – blocks corner' to know how to make a dice.*

Differentiation

- Don't use the dice for the younger toddlers, just let them put the mangos on the tree (without rolling the dice).
- Use other letters (not the vowels).

Letter patterns



What is this?

These are big 'cards' with a letter on it.
The children have to fill the letter with caps.

What do children learn?

- The children learn the shapes of the different letters.
- The children learn to recognise the different letters.

Link with the syllabus

Language and literacy – 3-4 years

Pre writing – handwriting

Term 1 – week 6	→ Do pattern work for letter 'a'
Term 1 – week 8	→ Trace letter 'a'
Term 1 – week 9	→ Trace letter 'e'
Term 1 – week 10	→ Do pattern work for letter 'e'
Term 1 – week 11	→ Trace letter 'o'
Term 2 – week 1	→ Do pattern work for letter 'o'
Term 2 – week 2/3	→ Trace letter 'u'
Term 2 – week 4	→ Trace letter 'i'

Language and literacy – 5-6 years

Term 1 – week 2	→ Pre-writing: trace dotted lines (circular, wavy, dash, zig-zag, castellated, straight)
Term 1 – week 4	→ Pre-writing: trace lines from left to right
Term 1 – week 8	→ Pre-writing: trace and colour letters

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

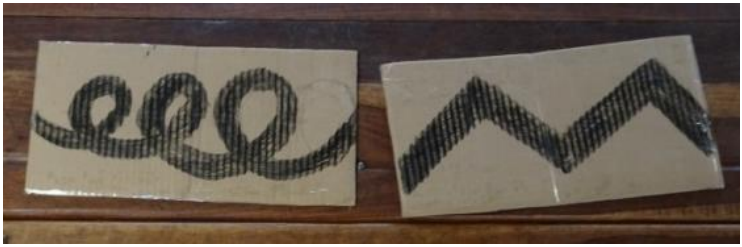
- Cardboard
- Marker
- Tape
- Caps (to play)

Steps:

STEP 1	Cut big pieces of cardboard (size A4)
STEP 2	Write a letter or a vowel on the cardboard (big enough)
STEP 3	Tape the pieces of cardboard to make them stronger

Differentiation

- Instead of using letters or vowels, you can use another pattern such as a wavy line, a zigzag line, a straight line, …



3.9 Game / puzzle corner

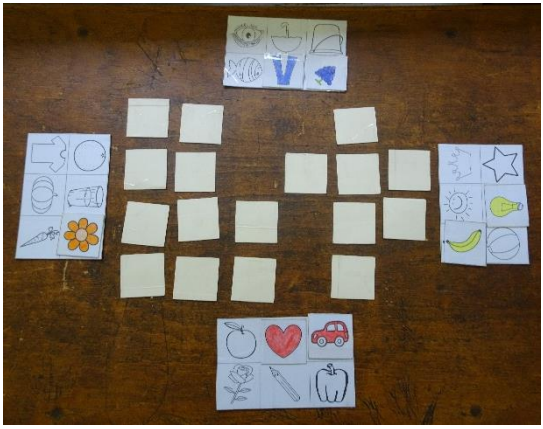
3.9.1 Materials you can collect for this corner

Puzzles, board games, card games, …

3.9.2 Materials you can make for this corner

The following games can be played in the game corner but you can also play them as a teacher with a little group of children.

Lotto



What is this?

This game is played with four children. You can play it on the floor, on a table or another flat surface. Every child gets one card (with four, six or eight symbols on it). The little squares (with the same symbols as the ones on the cards) are laying in the middle with the white side up. The first player takes a symbol from the middle and checks if this symbol can also be found on his/her own card. If it's on his/her card, he/she keeps the symbol and puts it over the symbol on his/her card. If it's not on his/her card, he/she puts the symbol back in the middle
The next player does the same thing.
When a player's card is full, he/she wins. The game ends when everyone's card is covered with symbols.

What do children learn?

- This is a game where the memory of the child is trained. They learn about symbols, colours, shapes, …
- The children also learn to follow rules and to wait their turn.
- The children also develop their language skills, they will learn new words from the cards while playing the game.

Link with the syllabus

Social studies – 3-4 years

0.1.4 Community
0.1.4.1 My community
0.1.4.1.1 Mention things found in a community: trees, pets, houses, roads, clinics, markets, shops, schools, …

Environmental science – 3-4 years

0.1.2 Plants
0.1.2.1 Plants in the locality
0.1.2.1.1 Identify different types of plants in the locality
Types of plants: trees, grass, flowers, maize, …
0.1.3 Animals
0.1.3.2 Wild animals
0.1.3.2.1 Identify common wild animals
Wild animals: elephant, lion, zebra, buffalo, monkey, giraffe, …
0.1.3.4 Insects
0.1.3.4.1 Identify common insects found in the locality
Common insects: Flies, grass, hoppers, butterflies, cockroaches, …
0.1.3 Nutrition and health
0.1.3.1 Food
0.1.3.1.1 Name different types of foods
Types of foods: nshima, chips, beef, chicken, fish, eggs, fruits, vegetables, bread, …
0.1.5 Environment
0.1.5.1 Weather patterns
0.1.5.1.1 Talk about things the can see in the sky
Common components of the universe: sun, moon, stars, clouds, …
0.1.5.1.3 Talk about types of clothes worn in different weather conditions

Clothes worn in sunny weather, rainy weather, cold weather, …

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

- Paper (plane or printed)
- Scissors
- Crayons
- Glue, cardboard and tape OR laminating sheets and laminator

Steps:

STEP 1	Make four cards of the same size. Divide each card into squares. Use four squares for the youngest toddlers and six or eight squares for the older toddlers.
STEP 2	Draw a symbol on every square on the card. These symbols can be animals, letters, shapes, ...
STEP 3	Divide another paper into squares (those have to be the same size as the squares on the cards from STEP 1.
STEP 4	Draw the same symbols (of the cards) on the squares and you cut the squares.

STEP 5	Make all the cards and squares stronger by gluing the cards and the squares on a piece of thin cardboard (f.e. cereal boxes) and covering them with tape. If you have a laminator, you can laminate the symbols and cards.

NOTE:

You can also choose to print the symbols. In that case you make four tables of four, six or eight symbols in a word document and print each document twice.

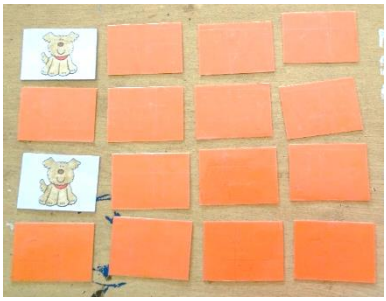
Cut out all the squares from one of the pairs of sheets.

Make the cards and squares stronger by taping or laminating them.

Differentiation

- Make a lotto with colours (see picture above)
- Make a lotto with shadows: the small squares have a figure, the cards only have the shadows of the figures
- Make a lotto with letters (language development)

Memory



What is this?

This game can be played with four children.
Put the symbols on the table or the floor with the symbol side facing down (see picture). The first child picks two cards and turns them. If the symbols are the same, the child can keep them. If the symbols are not the same, he/she has to put them back. The game ends when all the cards are taken away. The child that has collected the most pairs, wins the game.

What do children learn?

- In this game, the memory of the child is trained.
- The children also learn how to follow rules and to wait their turn.
- They can learn about symbols, animals, shapes, etc. (depending on which symbols you use to make the game).

Link with the syllabus

Idem lotto 3-4 years
Environmental science
0.2.4.1 Domestic animals
0.2.4.1.1 Identify domestic animals in the locality
Domestic animals: cats, dogs, cows, pigs, sheep, goats

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

- Paper (plane or printed)
- Scissors
- Crayons
- Glue, cardboard and tape OR laminating sheets and laminator

Steps:

STEP 1	Divide a paper in 8 or 12 pieces (they all have to have an equal size).
STEP 2	Draw a symbol, letter, number, … on every piece.
STEP 3	Copy the paper (or just draw it twice) so you have a pair of each symbol.
STEP 4	Cut the pieces into small cards.

STEP 5	Make all the cards stronger by gluing them on a piece of thin cardboard (f.e. cereal boxes), cutting them out and covering them with tape. If you have a laminator, you can laminate the cards.

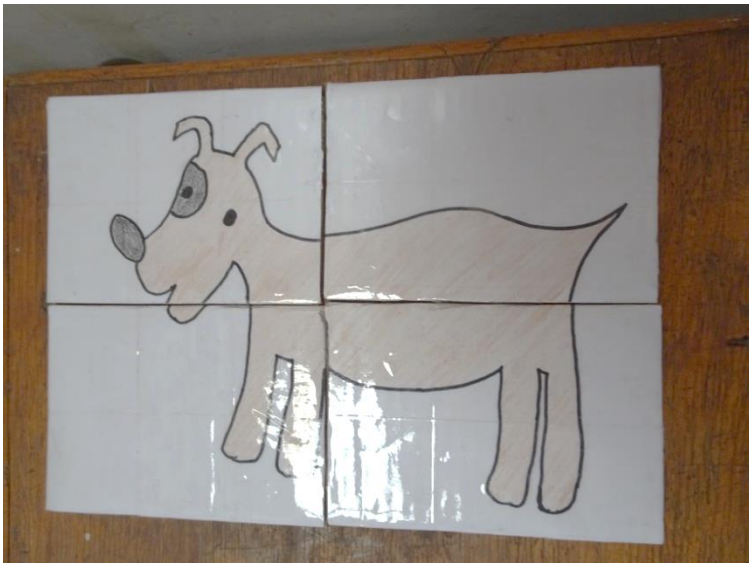
NOTE:

You can also choose to print the symbols. In that case you make a table of 8 or 12 pieces in a word document and put the symbols in the table. Print the document twice and cut out all the pieces separately. Make the pieces stronger by taping or laminating them.

Differentiation

- You can make a memory with figures and their shadows, where the children have to match the right shadow with the right figure.
- You can make a memory with two halves of a figure. For example: a memory of animals where the child searches for the head of the elephant and the body. The two pieces combined make a nice and complete elephant.

Puzzles



What is this?

A picture cut into small pieces. The small pieces can be cut into various shapes and can be fit together to form the picture. The children have to try to make the picture.

What do children learn?

- The children develop their sight by looking intensely at the pieces.
- The children learn to think logically by searching how the pieces fit together.
- The children develop visual synthesis.

- The children learn how to represent the picture of the puzzle.
- The children learn to sort the puzzle pieces.

Link with the syllabus

Idem lotto 3-4 years
Environmental science – 5-6 years
0.2.2 The human body
0.2.2.1 Parts of the body
0.2.2.1.2 Mention functions of the different external parts of the body
Functions of different external parts of the body. Hearing-ears, seeing-eyes.

What do you need and how can you make it?

You will need:

- Paper (plane or printed)
- Scissors
- Crayons
- Glue, cardboard and tape OR laminating sheets and laminator

Steps:

STEP 1	Take a paper and draw a picture on it OR look for a picture on the internet and print it.

STEP 2	Laminate the picture (if you printed it) OR glue the picture (you drew yourself) on the cardboard box.
STEP 3	Divide the picture in pieces of the same size (for young children four to six pieces, for older children eight to ten pieces) and cut the picture.
STEP 4	If you could not laminate the picture, put tape around the puzzle pieces to make them stronger.
STEP 5	Mark the pieces on the back with a little symbol so you can always know which pieces belongs together. 

Differentiation

- Make puzzles of 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, or more pieces.
- Make puzzles with different shaped pieces (not all straight but also wavy lines)

4. Activity Chart

Before the children play in the educational corners, they have to be divided into the different corners. The children can decide for themselves in which corner they will play. This can be organised with an activity chart or bracelets.

The information below about the activity chart and the bracelets is written by Laura Melkebeke and Sanne Clottemans, Belgian teachers in ECE[2].

What is an activity chart?

A wall that shows who can play what, where, when and using which material. You can easily divide the children in groups by using the symbols or by using the same coloured bracelet. You can divide the children in groups or show them the activity colour panel, indicating how many are allowed per activity, and let them decide where they want to play.

What is the purpose?

- *It helps you to divide the children in smaller groups.*
- *The children read which activities they can do.*
- *The children learn to make choices.*

[2] Melkebeke, L. & Clottemans, S. (2015). Low cost materials: for language development. VVOB.

- *The children learn to play at one place at a time.*
- *The children are more focused while playing.*

How can you make it?

Take a wooden board that is big enough to show the activities and to divide the different groups. Give each group a different colour. When making activity cards, you make a little hole in them, and you put some nails in the activity chart. This way, you can change the activities and you can hang them on a different colour. The choice is yours whether you want to use nails or bracelets (bracelets are a safer option though).

Make sure that there is only a small group of children (maximum five) in each corner. For corners such as the rest corner, three children are enough.
It's absolutely prohibited to have all the children in one corner.

5. Cleaning after playing in the educational corners

When the children are done playing in the corners, they have to tide up the corners together with the teacher. It's also a part of playing in the educational corners. The children will learn to sort the blocks by shapes, by texture, by colour, etc. They also learn to match materials into the different boxes.
It is important that you take enough time for this ritual of tiding up.

You can make this moment playful by singing a song:

Pick pick pick pick picking the papers
Tola tola tola tola the papers
Pick pick pick pick picking the blocks
Tola tola tola tola the blocks
And so on