

INCLUSION
STRATEGIES
& TOOLS

INVITATIONS TO PLAY (PROVOCATIONS)

An invitation to play is a thoughtfully arranged setup of materials, spaces, or objects that entices children...



...it encourages children to explore, create, and engage in open-ended play...

...and is a way of sparking curiosity without giving specific instructions or outcomes.



WHY IT MATTERS

- Encourages independence and choice-making
- Sparks creativity, problem-solving, and exploration
- Supports focused engagement and deep thinking
- Respects the child as a capable, curious learner

Invitations to play offer multiple entry points, allowing children with different abilities, interests, and communication styles to engage meaningfully. When children’s ideas shape how the play unfolds, they feel a sense of belonging and ownership in the space.

HOW TO CREATE INVITATIONS TO PLAY

Some key characteristics include:

- Open-ended: No right or wrong way to use the materials
- Child-led: Children choose how to interact, explore, and create
- Accessible: Items are easy to reach, manipulate, and combine
- Visually Appealing: Arranged in an inviting, often beautiful, way that draws children in
- Intentional: Materials and layout are chosen purposefully by educators to provoke interest or support developmental goals

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Invitations to play can be created in any area, big or small, and adapted so all children can join in. Some examples include:

Materials	Invitation
A tray with clay, leaves, pinecones and sticks	Invites nature-based sculpting
A mirror with loose parts (buttons, beads, fabric)	Invites symmetry and reflection exploration
A table with recycled materials, glue and scissors	Invites building and invention
A light table with coloured blocks	Invites experimentation with color and light

TIPS

- Rotate or refresh materials regularly to maintain interest and spark new ideas.
- Observe how children use the invitation and be ready to adapt based on their responses.
- Offer a variety of textures, colours, and materials to engage different senses and learning styles.