

3. Place tools and equipment into empty boxes with lids. Put a label on each box identifying its contents.
4. Hang photos or posters that represent the theme in the Dramatic Play Area.
5. Set out the prop box contents and watch the children have fun!
6. Change the area as the children's interest level indicates.

### More to do

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Set out books related to the prop box theme in the Library Area. Invite community helpers to come and visit the class and talk about their jobs.

### Resources

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For more information on creating prop boxes for your program see:

*Young Children*, July 1993, by Sue Myhre, pages 6 – 11

*Texas Child Care*, Spring 1997, by Sue Myhre, pages 2 –10

 Sue Myhre, Bremerton, WA

# Dramatic Play Centers

### Materials

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Cloth bags  
Fabric markers

### What to do

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1. Use fabric markers to decorate cloth bags for various dramatic play items such as firefighters, doctors, gardening, house, and bakery.
2. Place the items into the bag in which they belong (for example, doctor items into the "doctor" bag). Hang or place the bags in a convenient location.
3. Using the bags allows you to change the items in the area on a regular basis without much fuss. In addition, you can use the bags in other areas, such as the Block Area, with only a minute's notice.
4. At the beginning of each day or week, choose a bag for the children to use and place it in the appropriate area.

## More to do

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Place books or pictures of people with different careers into the bags to extend the activities. Send a note home to parents asking for donations of items that they might commonly throw out (for example, old computer keyboards, empty bottles, and so on).

 Melissa Browning, Milwaukee, WI

# Natural Beauty

## Materials

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A variety of items and objects made from natural materials obtained from contributions, garage sales, and thrift stores (see below)

Carpet tape

Baskets

## What to do

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1. Because classroom furnishings and equipment often are made of plastic, the learning environment can appear hard and cold. There are many ways to add items to soften the room's environment. Bring in fresh flowers when possible, and add live plants to the classroom. (For example, put a plant on top of a toilet tank to soften an angular bathroom.)
2. Cover tables with cotton or linen cloths, or use lengths of materials in seasonal patterns. Hang cotton or other natural fiber curtains on the windows. Add soft place mats to the Dramatic Play Area and the Snack Area.
3. Use carpet tape to join neutral-colored carpet samples, then use these rugs to soften floor areas. An Oriental-patterned rug adds a lot of visual interest and an "upscale" look to the room. Or, add a bath rug with rubber backing to the Dramatic Play Area or the Library.
4. Store small toys in straw or wicker baskets. Use baskets to store art materials.
5. Fill a few baskets with natural items that the children can explore. Select materials such as seashells, sea sponges, dried flower petals, pine cones, seed pods, fresh fruit, mixed nuts in shells, gourds, miniature pumpkins, dried flowers, or small branches. Add a magnifying glass for in-depth exploration. (Change the items regularly to help children's interest.)