

Prop Boxes and Dramatic Play Theme Ideas

The Dramatic Play area is one of the most popular and important centers for learning through play in a Pre-K classroom. Teachers should take care to ensure this area is well-equipped with a variety of materials designed to encourage imaginative play. Traditionally, the dramatic play area has been referred to as the “housekeeping” area; however, when children interact with one another in this area, they often act out scenes from other aspects of their lives such as grocery stores, doctor’s offices, classrooms, hair salons, or restaurants. This type of imaginative play is an essential part of a young child’s developmental learning process because it allows them to develop skills in areas such as literacy, math, social studies, and abstract thinking. While creating a restaurant, twirling around in a fancy costume, stomping around in grown-up shoes, or wearing the king’s crown, Pre-K children are learning to solve problems, play cooperatively, share responsibility, and think creatively. Use the ideas below for creating a dramatic play area that encourages young children to use their imaginations in meaningful play.

It is required that an additional theme is accessible each day. Teachers may create several prop boxes to rotate throughout the year to encourage student interest and engagement.

Leisure

- **Football** – jersey, helmet, shoes with plastic cleats, cheerleading outfit, pom-poms, shoulder pads, mega phone, etc.
- **Camping** – tent, sleeping bag, “campfire” made from paper towel tubes and tissue paper, lantern, backpack, flashlight, binoculars, compass, first aid kit, and canteen.
- **Beach**– Blanket, sunglasses, flip-flops, beach hat, beach towel, float, empty sunscreen bottles, small cooler, water bottle, sand bucket and shovel, sand molds, small beach chair, goggles, radio, and umbrella.
- **Birthday Party**– party hats, cups, plates, napkins, table cloth, fake cake, presents, camera, and gift wrap.
- **Gardening** – gardening gloves, plastic gardening tools, empty seed packets, kneeling pad, small wheelbarrow, spray bottles, watering can, sunglasses, silk flowers, and straw hats.
- **Golf** – plaid pants and skirts, sweater vests, golf caps, plastic golf clubs, ping pong balls (instead of hard golf balls), and saddle oxford shoes.
- **Hiking** – hiking boots, compass, walking stick, hat, backpack, and canteen/water bottle.
- **Picnic** – picnic blanket/table cloth, picnic basket, cooler, pretend ants, sunglasses, straw hats, plastic food, plates, cups, and utensils.
- **Vacation** – travel brochures, posters, maps, play money, binoculars, compass, sunglasses, suitcase, travel clothes, passport, first aid kit, and camera.

Fantasy

- **Animals** – plastic animal noses, animal ear headbands, and animal costumes.
- **Circus** – clown shoes, noses, and clothes, circus program, hula hoops, megaphone, and popcorn bags.
- **Storybook characters** – dress-up clothes or costumes, books or posters of the characters, and props from stories.



Prop Boxes and Dramatic Play Theme Ideas (Continued)

Variety of Careers

- **Artist** – berets, sketch pads, large loose fitting shirts, table top easel, “paintings,” paint brushes, color palate, pottery wheels, pottery, sculptures, and art smocks.
- **Barber/Beauty Shop** – curlers, hair dryers and curling irons (without the cords), hair brushes, combs, hair picks, shower caps, barber capes, magazines with pictures of various hairstyles, empty shampoo/hairspray bottles, wigs, cash register, and play money.
- **Construction Work** - hard hat, tool belt, tool box, plastic tools, plastic workbench, work boots, safety goggles, work gloves, lunchbox, walkie-talkies, construction signs, and orange construction tape (or ribbon).
- **Doctor’s office** – lab coat, scrub shirts, surgical masks, plastic syringes, stethoscope, bandages, pretend prescription pad and writing utensils, cotton balls, sheets of white butcher paper, appointment book, and magazines for the waiting area.
- **Florist** – plastic/silk flowers, plastic vases, styrofoam, tissue paper, cellophane, scotch tape, small gift cards, invoice pad, writing utensils, and delivery truck made from a cardboard box.
- **Ice Cream Store** – scoops, large pom-poms or cotton balls, empty ice cream topping bottles, napkins, spoons, dishes, menu (store donated or teacher made), construction paper sprinkles/toppings, empty ice cream containers, cash register, play money, and hats/shirts with ice cream store logos.
- **School** – plastic lunch box, cafeteria trays, pointer, backpack, spiral notebook, pencils, dry erase boards, dry erase markers, large chalkboard and chalk.
- **Office** – phone, rolodex, computer keyboard or typewriter, briefcase, portfolio, old calculator, desk calendar, file folders, business cards, writing utensils, paper clips, legal pads, note pads, sticky notes, message book, and phone book.
- **Firefighter** – fire hats, boots, hose, oxygen tanks (empty two-liter bottles), firefighter uniform, fire truck made from cardboard box, bell, first aid kit, and fake fire hydrant.
- **Musician** – microphones, head phones, record albums, instruments, flashy clothes/costumes, stage, stage lights, and sunglasses.
- **Post Office** – mailbox, mail bins/carts, stamps/stickers, old stationary, envelopes, junk mail, writing utensils, cash register, play money, post office uniform/hats, cardboard boxes, bubble wrap, and packing tape.
- **Restaurant** – menu (restaurant donated or teacher made), apron, tray, food containers, plastic food, order pad, writing utensils, cash register, play money, fake credit cards, salt/pepper shakers, empty condiment containers, placemats, tablecloths, napkins, dishes, silverware, pitcher, server uniform, and chef hat.
- **Supermarket/Grocery Store** – plastic shopping baskets, child-sized push carts, plastic fruit/vegetables, scales for weighing, cash register, cash register tape, play money, play credit cards, play checks, aprons/shirts/hats with grocery logos, food boxes/cans/bottles, coupons, paper grocery bags, shopping list, and department signs.
- **Veterinarian Office** – stuffed animals, stethoscope, doctor’s kit, grooming brushes, empty grooming bottles, towels, pet bowls, empty pet food containers, dog toys, lab coat, scrub shirts, appointment book, writing utensils, cash register, play money, posters of pets, and pet reference books.