

9 Reasons Why worksheets Are not appropriate for young children

From: Learning Through Experiences

As a parent and educator, when I walk into an environment with early learners, whether that be in home-school setting or preschool, I want to see those kids engaged in their learning. Young children should be manipulating materials, testing hypothesis, and exploring the world around them. You do not need to “print” to create learning activities for your child.

1. Worksheets Do Not Teach

A worksheet does not teach, no matter how hard you believe they do, they just don't. Children, young children especially, need time to explore concepts and manipulate materials in order to learn. A cut and paste worksheet on the life cycle of a butterfly is really just giving them cutting practice, not teaching them about the life cycle. But the simple manipulation of life cycle models or watching the life cycle happen in front of them is much more meaningful and appealing.

Hands on learning benefits all learning styles, even those kids who love to write.

2. Worksheets Are Not Appropriate Because They Do Not Challenge Kids

Really all worksheets do is test rote memory... A way for children to just spit back information to you. In the end, do we want a child to memorize concepts, or do we want them to understand them and apply them to different situations? I bet it's the latter. By using a hands on approach to learning, we give kids the opportunity to test the concepts in different situations, so they can understand how this concept can be applied to different areas of their life. Hands on learning gives children the opportunity to use and refine their problem solving, creativity, and critical thinking skills.

3. Worksheets Do Not Allow for Higher Level Thinking

Again, worksheets are there for spitting out information. Where is the thinking in that? Hands on manipulation of objects, gives children the opportunity to create hypothesis, test them out, and use their problem solving and critical thinking skills to completely understand how it works.

4. Worksheets May Be “Teaching” What a Child is Not Ready For or Interested In

This is more towards workbooks, especially if you follow the workbook page by page. Just because the workbook says it's for 3 year olds, does not mean your child is ready for it. It's best to teach your child based on their [interests](#) and signs of readiness. A workbook does not allow room for every child's unique growth and development sequence.

5. Worksheets Leave No Room to Challenge The Norm

This is a huge one for me. When I taught in the public schools, we were told to get kids to think for themselves and defend their answers. But, their answers and evidence must match the teacher's guide and test answer key.

Really?

How is it possible to get a child to think for themselves and defend their position, but also be correct 100% of the time according to an answer key? It's just not possible! I look at it this way, if a child can defend their answer to any question using evidence then it's correct whether the answer key says so or not. In 20 years, do we want people running this country who only know how to give one answer, or do we want people who can be creative and think outside the box?

6. Worksheets Do Not Provide Real, Meaningful Experiences

A child needs to have a reason for learning the concept. Completing a worksheet is not a good enough reason for a child. Providing activities that connect to real life gives children a reason to learn it. If you present a worksheet to a child and say "Read this so you can answer these questions." Are they going to be motivated? Most likely not! But if a child is trying to learn how to build a sturdy fort, but must read the directions to learn how to do so, then that gives them a reason to learn.

7. Worksheets Are Not Appropriate Because They Take Away the Love of Learning

I see parents all the time in different Facebook groups mention something like this...

I'm at a lost. My 2 year old is frustrating me with learning her letters. I have tried everything, we do a worksheet a day, but I feel like I'm beating a dead horse. Well that should be a clue right there! If you are frustrated and your child is frustrated when worksheets are being used, then it's not an effective learning tool. I know what you're thinking! But what if my child loves doing worksheets? I'm not going to tell you that a young child isn't going to love worksheets because I was the type of child that loved worksheets. I would sit for an hour and complete a whole workbook. My mom couldn't buy enough workbooks to keep me satisfied, so I know that some kids do love them. I'm not saying you should never use a worksheet, especially with those kids who LOVE them. Really you should only be using them with the kids that love them. If your child doesn't love worksheets, you should be finding a new way to learn. Now that doesn't mean you give them worksheets everyday, all day. Think of it this way, what if your child loved candy as much as they loved doing worksheets and they wanted to eat candy all day long? Would you let them? Most likely not. Just like candy, worksheets should be used in moderation with the ones who love doing them.

8. Worksheets are Too Abstract

Young children are still in Piaget's Preoperational Stage, which means they need symbols to represent objects. These young children cannot think abstractly. For example, they need a ball in their hands to understand what a ball is. Seeing the word ball on a worksheet or sometimes even just a picture of a ball, means nothing to them. That's why hands on learning is best because it gives the child a symbol for their thinking.

9. Writing on Lines is Not Appropriate

A very popular type of worksheet for this age group is handwriting sheets where the child is expected to trace the letter. These are not developmentally appropriate for young children. Even though huge letters that take up the whole page may be annoying to most adults, it's normal for a child to write this way. Their [fine motor skills](#) are not refined enough to focus on tracing small letters. I know worksheets are the easy way to give a child something to do and easy to plan, but sometimes the best things in life are not easy.

Please check out learningthroughexperiences.com for more developmentally appropriate information and learning ideas.