

## Open-ended dressing-up top tips for nurseries

**Often for special days like Fairy Tale Day or National Storytelling Week parents will rush to purchase their child's favourite character costume like Spiderman, Batman, a police suit or a princess dress for them to wear to your setting, but is this necessary?**

These are often donated to early years settings once finished with, along with numerous outfits that you may already have. Although many children enjoy using these to dress-up in and role-play, these commercial outfits can stifle children's imagination of that particular character. For example, a child in a Spiderman suit may only shoot web from their hands or a child in a princess dress may only dance.

**Have you ever paused to think about providing open-ended role-play materials instead?**

The benefits are endless! Open-ended role-play materials provide the opportunity for children to:

- Develop their imagination and creativity
- Develop their fine and gross motor skills as they dress themselves
- Develop their communication and language skills as they act-out roles
- Use new vocabulary, show kindness and empathy and develop their social and emotional development as they play together.



### See our top tips for creating an open-ended dressing-up area:

- You can still follow children's interests using open-ended materials. Children may choose to create their own princess outfit by putting on beads and a tiara but this princess may patrol the outside area or drive a train
- Provide a range of open-ended materials like real clothing (shirts, waistcoats), material, netting, hats, shoes, beads, gloves and scarves to support children's wider imagination and allow them to choose what they become
- Support behaviour by not providing popular costumes that they must share
- Provide open-ended dressing-up opportunities that are more inclusive and accessible. Often pre-made outfits are directed to boys or girls, all in ones can have difficult fastenings making it challenging for children to access independently and pre-made outfits come in a selection of ages and sizes meaning they do not fit all children. Providing a range of materials for children to use despite size or gender prevents this
- Reflect different cultures and traditions by having a range of multi-cultural materials
- Enhance the area with stories, books and positive images
- Encourage open-ended play with all ages and indoors and out
- Always risk assess items such as beads and scarves and supervise.