

# Overcoming and Loving Bits and Pieces

“Too many pieces”, is what we often hear when making a suggestion for a child. If that child still puts things in their mouth, that’s a legitimate concern. Often times, though, it’s the sibling of a baby or toddler that must pay the price of “too many pieces”. In this case, caution and vigilance are needed, but the older child needs pieces.

More Pieces:

Adds depth and variety to play

Accommodates more participants for social interaction

Develops fine motor skills when small pieces are manipulated

Facilitates understanding of numbers and attributes

So, the real question is how do I manage pieces?

Make sure you have containers to store and organize the pieces. This helps the child learn to be organized and to put things away in their correct place. Many times it’s also a great sorting task (organize by color or other attribute). Containers with tight fitting lids, stored high, unless supervised, work well. Zip- lock bags are an inexpensive way to store many items. When giving a toy with many pieces as a gift, you may want to provide the storage container, too (if it doesn’t already come with one).

When introducing a new toy with many pieces, start with fewer pieces while the child “free explores” (child directed) and figures out what to do with them. While they are still interested, provide the opportunity for your child to add more pieces as they wish. It’s interesting to observe their

curiosity and expansion of play. If you are playing with them, it's a great time to follow their lead and do what they do. Later, you may want to suggest a direction of play if the child seems open to it (let's find all the buttons with two holes). Adding another item increases the dynamics of play (tongs or tweezers with buttons).

If you provide many different toys/tools with lots of pieces, your child may start combining items to add even more depth to their play (small animal figures with small blocks).

Providing toys with many pieces is so important for a young child's development. It just takes some organization to make it work.