Choose or Lose – Suggested Responses

Read about the following materials. Then decide whether you would choose the item for your program or lose it. If you choose the item, describe how you would use it safely. If you lose the item, explain why it is unsafe. Because family child care settings are often mix-aged, your answers may vary depending on the ages and developmental skills of the children currently enrolled.

Write Choose or Lose? (If lose, explain why it is unsafe)

Dart board with plastic darts

*Lose — or choose but check.*

**Explanation:** This item is likely unsafe for younger children in your care who are still developing control over their ability to project items (for them, soft balls with a Velcro target would be a safer choice). However, for school-age children, if the appropriate environment were set-up and maintained (e.g., outside, away from all other activities), and this activity was actively supervised, these materials could be safe. It would be critical to think carefully about the skills of the children in your care and how you would make sure the materials were used safely.

Pencils

*Choose.*

**Explanation:** Pencils are safe and can be great for developing literacy and fine motor skills. However, make sure when you are doing your safety check that all sharp scissors and pencils are stored with points facing down. When the points are facing up, there is more risk of injury. If you have infants or toddlers in your care, think about where you can safely store these materials, and be present for active monitoring to ensure the pencils are used safely. The pencil in itself is not dangerous, but how it is stored could be.

A donated computer

*Choose but check.*

**Explanation:** You must make sure you fully inspect all pieces of the computer before you allow children to use it. Make sure all electrical parts are in good working condition. Look for fraying. Make sure you plug the computer into an approved surge protector and do not use extension cords.

*See more information in the Technology Lesson.*

If this item was donated to take it apart and explore the inside, make sure you think carefully about any sharp edges and small pieces. Which children can safely engage with this material and how — do you need safety goggles? Safety gloves?
A portable music player with speakers.

**Choose but check.**

**Explanation:** Make sure the music player is plugged in safely or that the battery cover is screwed closed. Be wary of playing music loudly. Remember, you need to be able to hear all the children in your care, even quiet infants. Teach children to stay a safe distance away from the speakers. Also, think carefully about how this item connects to your curriculum and the overall environment you are trying to create.

A wading pool filled with water

**Lose.**

**Explanation:** Wading pools are not recommended for use in child-development programs (Caring for Our Children, 2011). There is a risk of slipping, head injury, and drowning. It is also difficult to maintain hygienic conditions in a wading pool. Try a sensory bin with low water or an outdoor sprinkler instead.

Remote-controlled helicopters

**Lose — or choose but check.**

**Explanation:** Remote-controlled helicopters are fun for older children and grown-ups, but they are hazardous for young children. They can cause eye injuries if not well controlled. As with the dart board idea, you need to consider the children in your care, what skills they possess, and if you have a space in your environment to safely execute this idea. It is wise not to let children bring these kinds of items to your program, as you would be less familiar with how to operate it and its safety features. However, depending on the age and developmental level of the children in your care, you may choose some safer remote-controlled helicopters.