

Why Children Should Learn to Use Power Tools

When I was about 10 years old, a friend and I attended a summer program for kids. One of the activities involved making a small wooden footstool.

We were both quite thrilled with the project, but my friend grew less thrilled when she discovered that one of the adults saw it as his duty to give her extensive help. She knew very well that she could handle a hammer and nails and was determined to have the fun of constructing the stool on her own.

Many of us would likely take the same view as the adult who tried to help my friend. After all, children are liable to injure themselves using dangerous tools, and we wouldn't want that to happen, right?

But a British nursery school is taking a different track – and [achieving huge success](#) in the process.

According to founders Emma Harwood and Hayley Room, Dandelion Education nursery school serves children ages two to eight and requires students to make their own toys. Children are allowed to use everything from hammers and nails to power drills in order to do so. The two teachers insist such a practice allows children to foster their imaginations and physical development, which eventually enables better cognitive development.

The philosopher John Locke likely would have agreed. Although he did encourage exercising some caution, he also [noted](#) that children who make their own toys learn qualities which will foster greater independence and maturity:

“How then shall they have the play-games you allow them, if none must be bought for them? I answer, they should make them themselves, or at least endeavour it, and set themselves about it... This will accustom them to seek for what they want in themselves, and in their own endeavours; whereby they will be taught moderation in their desires, application, industry, thought, contrivance, and good husbandry; qualities that will be useful to them when they are men, and therefore cannot be learned too soon, nor fixed too deep.”

These qualities of independence and self-sufficiency are not only being neglected in the way we allow today's children to play; they are being neglected in almost every area of child-rearing. As Lenore Skenazy and Jonathan Haidt [remark](#) in *Reason Magazine*, today's children can't walk a few blocks to school by themselves, can't stay home alone, or can't do a myriad of other things which were once a common part of childhood. Unfortunately, such heavy protection may be the reason so many young adults are fragile, sensitive, and unable to handle the responsibilities of adulthood:

“When we don't let our kids do anything on their own, we don't get to see just how competent they can be—and isn't that, ultimately, the greatest reward of parenting? We need to make it easier for grown-ups to let go while living in a society that keeps warning them not to. And we need to make sure they won't get arrested for it.”

Would you agree? If so, what are some steps society needs to take to return to such a mindset toward childhood?

[Image Credit: U.S. Air Force [photo](#) by Jan Abate]