

Run, Hop, Fly: Animal Sorting

Engage children in learning about science, math, and literacy through exploration and play with toy animals.

START

- Invite children to sort the animals by different characteristics. They will discover that the animals can be sorted in many different ways and that there are many ways to describe an animal.
- Introduce this activity by pointing out the paper plates with assorted animals on them and asking if anyone would like to play an animal matching and sorting game.
- For younger children, you can introduce the activity by playing with the animals yourself and making up conversations between them, such as Has anyone seen my friend who has big horns/fur/wings just like I do? Let the children follow up to find the "friends."
- For older children, you can ask them to each pick a paper plate and carefully look at the animals on it. Ask them what they observe. Do any of the animals have something in common, such as number of legs, ears vs. horns, or a tail?
- Adults can initiate conversations by asking Which is your favorite animal? Do you recognize any of these?

NEXT STEPS

- Let the children figure out their own methods for separating and grouping their animals, but engage them in conversation to find out what method they're using. If they get frustrated, give them hints, such as Do you want all of the animals with four legs to sit together on this plate and all of the animals with two to sit over there?
- Adults can contribute to this activity by using lots of rich language to describe the animals, such as size (huge, large, small, tiny), color, and texture (shaggy, smooth, rough).
- Adults can also ask the children how they know what a specific animal is called. For example, How did you know that this is an elephant? Because of his big, long nose!

MATERIALS

- * Assorted plastic animals (different sizes of the same animals, as well as different species)
- * Paper plates to sort animals

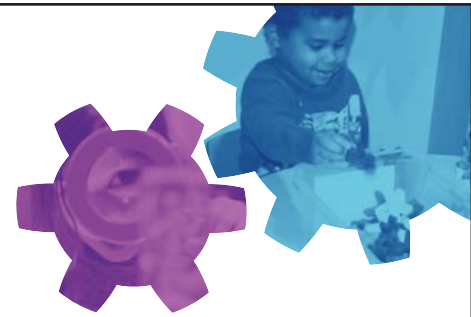
Learning Guideline:

Math: Sort, categorize, or classify objects by more than one attribute

Tip Sheets:

Think, Imagine

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FINISH UP

- You can record the children’s names and list the different types of sorting characteristics they used and the number of animals. Combine each child’s sorting characteristics to come up with a final tally.
- Encourage the children to talk about their experience with this activity. Was there anything that surprised you? Got you extra excited? Anything that you would like to try at home?
- The children can help to mix the animals back up when they are done, to set the stage for the next players.

EXPAND YOUR ACTIVITY

- Adults can encourage children to make up stories about their animals by asking questions such as How did the moose get here? What do you think the goats and birds can play together?
- This activity can be expanded into questions about what the different animals eat and whether that can be a different way to sort them. There could be a separate whiteboard tally for these other types of characteristics.
- Provide photos or pictures of different habitats that animals could be sorted into; for example, the ocean, forest, farmland, or zoo.

TAKE IT HOME

- Look through magazines or calendars with your child and cut out animal pictures. They can be glued onto cardboard to make cards, or just left as they are. Using toy animals from home (even stuffed animals will work!) play a matching game with the cards and real objects.
- Try using the sorting techniques and games on other groups of objects, such as toys, dishes, or plants.

BOOKS

- *My Big Animal Book* by Roger Priddy
- *Bears: Polar Bears, Black Bears and Grizzly Bears* by Deborah Hodge
- *Count on Math: Activities for Small Hands and Lively Minds* by Pam Schiller and Lynne Peterson

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