PET CENTRAL



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Language and Literacy

Letter Hunt: Themed Alphabet

EZ.003.LA.1001-1002

Activity Type:
Large Group, Small Group, Transitions, and Routines

Objective:
Students will identify and recognize uppercase and lowercase letters in different contexts and environments.

Each themed classroom includes a magnetic alphabet. A featured activity will be included with each themed magnetic alphabet. Students, with adult support, choose a letter to focus on each day, displaying the letter on the magnetic board. Students go on a hunt to find the letter in other places around the classroom, school, outdoors, etc. Providing students with targeted opportunities to find letters outside of classroom experiences helps reinforce recognition.

WHAT TO DO

1. Tell students they get to be letter detectives! Display the letter of the day on the magnetic board. Review the letter name. Ask students to find the letter in another place around the room and bring it back to the meeting area if able or share the location with the class.
2. Use the Alphabet Learning Locks to create a letter hunt game. Hide the Alphabet Learning Locks and give each child a letter key. Encourage children to find the matching lock and open the lock with their key.

PLAY TIPS

- The alphabet hunt can be left in the writing center as a free-choice activity as well. Make an alphabet list and alphabet cards that can be hidden around the room. After hiding the letters around the room, ask students to use the list to find the hidden letters, checking the letters off as they are found.
- Look for the letter of the day as you move through transition periods. Students can look for letters in the school, outside on the playground, and even report on letters found at home!
- Include a letter hunt as part of the morning meeting. Encourage students to find a matching letter in a new spot every day.

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Mathematics

Sorting: Number Cards

EZ.003.LA.1003-1004

Activity Type:
Free Choice

Objectives:
Students will sort items.
Students will reinforce one-to-one correspondence.

Each themed classroom includes themed number cards. A featured activity will be included with each set of themed number cards. Students group items by color, shape, and size throughout their day in organic ways. They may sort cereal by color at breakfast or sort writing utensils by type in the writing center at school. Students sort Lego bricks by color, using a parachute as a mat, in a free choice center. Students can use number cards to reinforce the number of bricks in each color category. As early learners group and sort items in the classroom and in their environment, they become better at making observations and noticing details, essential for early literacy and math development.

WHAT TO DO

Lay out the parachute in a free choice center and encourage students to sort building bricks by color. As they sort, have students occasionally stop sorting and make one-to-one associations by counting each building brick in a category and finding the corresponding number card.

PLAY TIPS

- Sort other items in the classroom. Collect different types of fabric and have students sort by self-identified categories. As they sort by color, pattern, or material type, have students say the attribute and share why the item is similar to others.
- Have students make towers using the building bricks. Have them choose the number card that matches the height of the tower (one-to-one correspondence).

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Mathematics

Counting and Measurement

EZ.003.LA.1005

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will count items up to 10 with one-to-one correspondence.
Students will begin to add to and take away items.
Students will begin to use nonstandard measurement tools.

Students use counting manipulatives, non-standard forms of measurement like Unifix Cubes, and themed counters, to practice one-to-one correspondence and early practices of measurement using themed math cards. Measurement can be an abstract concept for young children. Manipulatives like blocks, cubes, or cups provide a tangible way to understand concepts like length, and height. By physically comparing and ordering objects, they can build a foundation for understanding measurement units later.

WHAT TO DO

After modeling how to use the mats, place the counting and measurement mats in a learning center as a teacher-directed or student-directed experience. As a teacher-directed experience, guide students to use manipulatives to show one-to-one correspondence and length. As a student-directed experience, allow students to freely explore the manipulatives and mats.

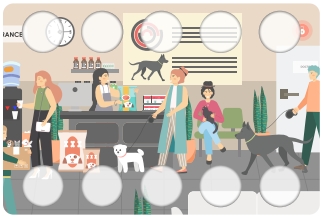
PLAY TIPS

- Use the math manipulatives to reinforce sorting by color and type. Encourage students to count how many are in each category. Encourage students to think of other ways to sort the manipulatives.
- Ask students to use the manipulatives to create patterns. Create simple pattern mats (ABAB, AABB, ABB) for additional support and guidance.

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Mathematics

Making Patterns

EZ.003.LA.1006

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will recognize common 2-D shapes.
Students will sort by features and attributes.
Students will recognize patterns.

Students explore patterns and properties of shapes as they create whole images using pattern blocks and themed pattern block mats. Pattern blocks boost students' ability to think critically, make predictions, and test their predictions.

WHAT TO DO

Pattern block mats and pattern blocks work well as a self-directed activity. The intuitive nature requires little direction. Place the mats and pattern blocks out for students to explore freely, encouraging students to match the pattern block shape and color to the correlating space on the whole image.

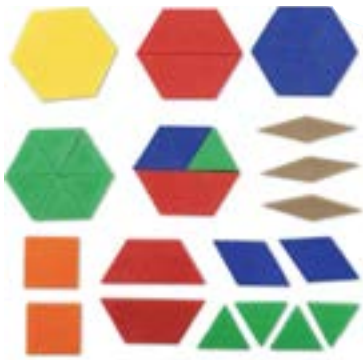
PLAY TIPS

- You can make your own pattern block cards by simply tracing pattern blocks on paper. Create a design using the pattern blocks and place the design on paper. Trace around the outer edge of your design and allow students to fill in the design with pattern blocks.
- Have students take a two-handed scoop of pattern blocks and sort by shape or color. Use graphing paper or a graphing mat to visualize the sorting process.
- Students can use mirrors to create patterns and make observations in the reflections. Ask students to describe what they are seeing as they create patterns in the mirrors.

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Language and Literacy

Pre-Writing Line Tracing

EZ.003.LA.1007

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will build pre-writing skills by tracing curved, notched, and zigzag lines. Students will recognize directionality in print and writing.

Students work on emergent literacy and transition to letter formations by tracing lines, patterns, and shapes with a theme in a dry erase, reusable format. To connect to fine motor development, students are encouraged to add detail. Themed templates are included for tracing.

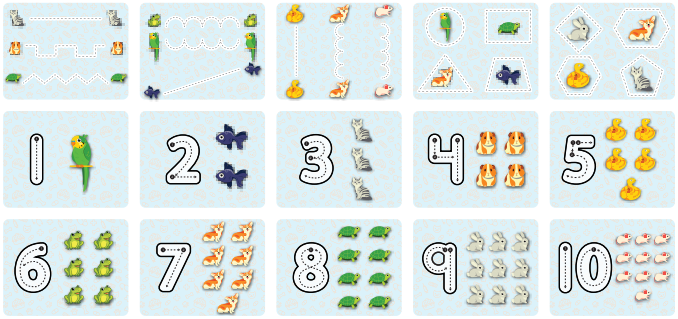
WHAT TO DO

1. Place the dry erase templates in the writing center. Students have the choice to use dry erase markers on the dry erase templates or place paper on the template and trace using a pencil/crayon. Remind students to start from left to right and top to bottom.
2. Encourage students to make their own tracing templates using the dry erase templates as a guide. Students can work on tracing shapes, lines, and numbers by repetitively tracing the same shape, line, or number using a different color crayon each time.

PLAY TIPS

- Include the themed tracing patterns in the writing center to align with other free-choice writing exercises. Using a clipboard will help students control the writing utensil.
- Tape the template vertically, on an easel or teacher board, to encourage the strengthening of fine motor development.

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Language and Literacy

Syllable Awareness

EZ.003.LA.1009

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will understand and use recognizable and new vocabulary.
Students will begin to blend and segment syllables in words.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. It is an essential skill in the process of learning to read and write. Young children participate in various sound activities to build sound awareness. Recognizing that words can be broken down into syllables or units of sound is a phonological skill.

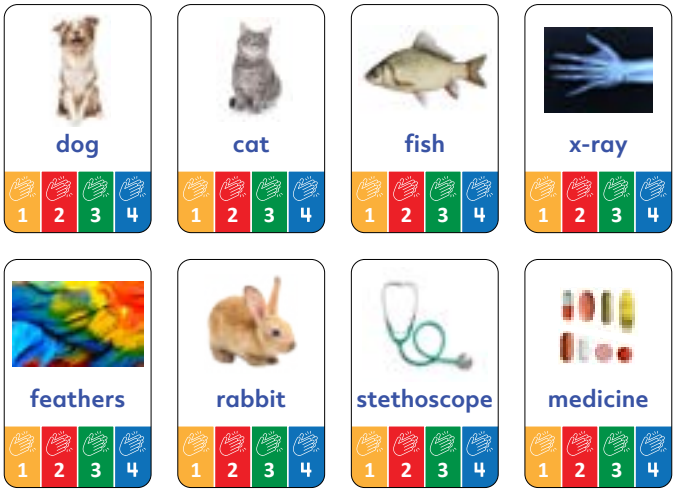
WHAT TO DO

Introduce the vocabulary cards as a guided activity or free choice center activity. Have students clap the number of beats on the vocabulary card and indicate the number by moving the clip.

PLAY TIPS

- Provide simple instruments to reinforce the number of syllables. Rather than clap the number of syllables in a word, students can shake the number of syllables.
- Students can use their body to emphasize syllables in a word. Have students jump up and down, tap their toes, march in place, do jumping jacks, or tap their head to count syllables.

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Language and Literacy

Rhyming Awareness

EZ.003.LA.1010

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will understand and use recognizable and new vocabulary.
Students will begin to recognize rhyming words.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. It is an essential skill in the process of learning to read and write. Young children participate in various sound activities to build sound awareness. Rhyming activities help children listen for ending sounds in words, a precursor to phonics activities in late preschool.

WHAT TO DO

Introduce the rhyming and matching cards as a small group, guided activity. Have students say the words on the rhyming cards and find the matching sound card. Students can place the matching sound card on the correlating picture.

PLAY TIPS

- Play rhyming words with body parts. Have students touch their head, nose, arm, etc. and think of a word that rhymes with the body part.
- Play, *I Spy with My Little Eye*, using target items in the classroom. For example, decide on something in the classroom, like *door* as the target word. Then state, "I spy with my little eye something that rhymes with *floor*." The students look around the classroom for something that rhymes with floor.

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Language and Literacy

Onset and Rime Awareness

EZ.003.LA.1011

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will understand and use recognizable and new vocabulary.
Students will begin to identify and segment one-syllable words.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. It is an essential skill in the process of learning to read and write. Young children participate in various sound activities to build sound awareness. Onset and rime activities help children identify patterns in words.

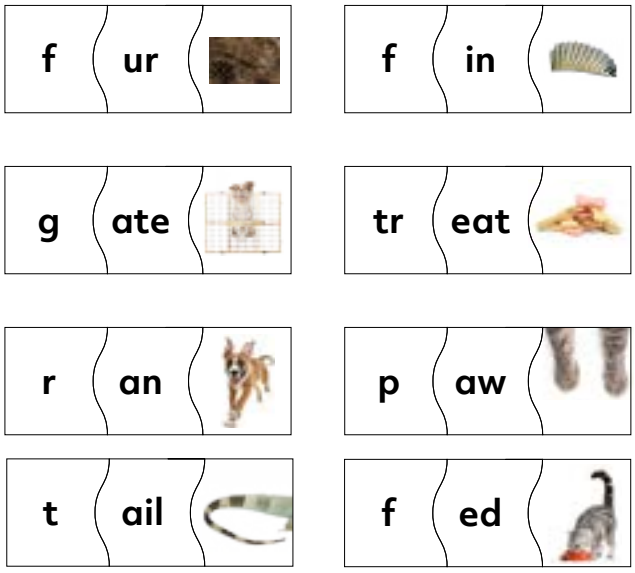
WHAT TO DO

Introduce the picture puzzles as a small group or free choice activity. As a small group exercise, model saying the onset together, the rime together, and the picture that identifies the word. As a free choice exercise, have the students put the pieces together to create a word.

PLAY TIP

Attach beginning and ending sounds to a set (2) of large dice. Have students roll the dice and say the word created, putting the onset and rime together.

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Language and Literacy

Go Fish: Word Bank Words

EZ.003.LA.1012

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will identify word bank words.
Students will match word bank words to correlating photos.

Each themed classroom includes a word bank. A featured activity will be included with each themed word bank. Students use word bank words, with pictures, to play *Go Fish*. Students can use associated pictures to help with word deductions. When students play card games like *Go Fish*, they further develop their ability to recognize numbers, match pairs, sort, and take turns.

WHAT TO DO

1. Model the game of *Go Fish* with the students using the word bank *Go Fish* cards. Each player receives 5 cards. The rest of the deck is stacked in the middle of the players, face down. Players lay down any matches.
2. Each player takes a turn, asking another player, "Do you have a ____." The card requested should be one the player already has to form a match. If the opponent has the card, they give the card to the player. If the opponent does not have the card, the player takes a card from the stack. The game continues around the players until all cards are used; players count their matches.

PLAY TIPS

- Instead of stacking the leftover cards in a pile, spread the cards out in an imaginary pond and act out fishing.
- You can make your own *Go Fish* cards to practice skill development. Make cards with numbers, letters, or even students' names!

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Fine Arts

Pets Have Needs

EZ.003.LA.1013

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objective:
Students will participate in dramatic expression and apply to real life situations.

Students discover that pets have needs and routines just like us by exploring the role of a veterinarian and pet owner with their peers. Pets eat their meals at designated times during the day, sleep, play, and need checkups. Using commonly found materials at a veterinarian's office, at home, or at a pet shop, students can explore these needs and routines. Creative drama provides an outlet for young children to express themselves and reinforce real situations and experiences in play-based ways.

WHAT TO DO

1. Brainstorm pet needs with a large or small group and record on chart paper, Include a small visual next to each need and place in the dramatic play center. Introduce the materials to the students and place them in the dramatic play area.
2. Encourage free exploration of the materials. Ask students, "Do you have what you need to keep a pet healthy?" and "Can you think of anything else you might need?" A few other questions to continue the imaginative play: "How can you make a pet feel better if they are sick?," "How would you play with a pet?," and "How would you keep a pet safe?"

PLAY TIPS

- Add "My Healthy Pet" templates to the writing center to encourage students to draw pictures of their healthy pet.
- Add books to the dramatic play area and encourage students to "read" to the pets.
- Print adoption interest forms and adoption certificates to extend the imaginative play.
- Have students sort the pet toys and make labels for customers.

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Mathematics

Fish Counting

EZ.003.LA.1014

Activity Type:
Small Group

Objectives:
Students will count objects up to 10 and add/take away one or more objects.

Students use one-to-one correspondence as they practice counting to 10 with faux fish and number identification cards. Students can use the faux fish to sort by self-selected categories or educator-suggested categories. Learning to count with understanding is a crucial number skill. Early number activities are best done with manipulatives in which students physically move objects as they count.

WHAT TO DO

1. Use number cards 1-10 to introduce the activity. As children become comfortable with number cards 1-10, introduce additional numbers. Lay number cards 1-10 face down in a pile, in no particular order. Place the fish in a pile.
2. Each child in the small group receives a fishbowl and chooses fish to put into their bowl (limit 10). One child starts by drawing a card and adding or subtracting that number of fish, either to their fishbowl or from their fishbowl. Once everyone has a turn to draw a card, continue drawing cards until the pile is empty. Ask students to count the final amount of fish in their bowl using one-to-one correspondence.

PLAY TIPS

- Use the fish counters and bowls to sort by type. Encourage children to count how many are in each sorted bowl.
- Students can use the fish counters and bowls in dramatic play. Add some water to the bowls and encourage play at the Red Flyer Wagon sensory table.

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Fine Arts

Expressive Art

EZ.003.LA.1015

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will participate in creative expression using open-ended materials.
Students will apply background information to creative expression activities.

Students explore the body coverings book set to discover the various body coverings of pets. After exploring the book set, educator provides a variety of art materials that simulate body coverings for open-ended, expressive art. Open-ended art allows children to create their own interpretations, which may mean experimenting with different techniques to see what happens or experiment with making representational art. Providing the time and space for these opportunities at school helps support development in creative thinking as well.

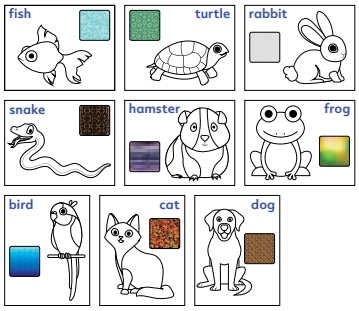
WHAT TO DO

1. After sharing non-fiction and fiction books about animal body coverings, review the different body coverings (i.e., fur, scales, skin, feathers) and the function of each. Relate to human body coverings.
2. Introduce the open-ended art activity. Students can choose an animal template and art materials (textured paper, sensory paper, faux feathers) to glue onto their template. Encourage students to share their animal creation.

PLAY TIP

Students can create animal crayon rubbings using the texture paper, sensory paper, or rubbing plates. Student places paper over the texture paper, sensory paper or rubbing plates and colors with crayon. Discuss the patterns that you see.

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Fine and Gross Motor

Pet Yoga

EZ.003.LA.1016

Activity Type:
Small Group, Large Group, Routine, and Transitions

Objective:
Students will develop gross motor movements to control mind and body.

Through pet yoga, students have fun learning yoga poses that simulate animal behaviors and patterns. Yoga helps students learn to concentrate, control their body, and develop patience as well as help develop gross motor skills like flexibility, strength, and balance.

WHAT TO DO

1. Yoga in the classroom is wonderful as it can be used in many different ways. As a large group activity, pass out individual foam tiles to work on the concept of personal space. As a small group activity, connect the tiles to create a mat to work on body movements. Incorporate yoga into daily routines and transitions to help build confidence and find a sense of calm.
2. Display pet yoga poses, one at a time, starting with small intervals of 15-20 seconds. As students become accustomed to the routine and practice, slowly increase the amount of time engaged in a pose.

PLAY TIPS

- Plan on modeling yoga poses for your students. If you are uncomfortable or unfamiliar with yoga poses, introduce child-friendly demonstration videos.
- Have students move and make sounds like pets as they are practicing yoga poses.
- Follow yoga with an activity that is quiet and reflective, like journaling, independent reading, or rest time.

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Fine Arts

Animal Puppet Theater

EZ.003.LA.1017

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will interact with playmates to creatively express themselves.
Students will use puppets to act out new ideas, tasks they are learning, or emotions they want to express.

Puppets help students tap into their imagination and creativity to express themselves in interactions with peers and educators in unique ways. Students use animal puppets to act out real-life scenarios and feelings in the Puppet Theater and Library. Students can act out scenarios that are provided or self-select scenarios that are meaningful to them. Exposure to puppetry in early learning can increase engagement with peers and can provide new opportunities to learn vocabulary and communication skills.

WHAT TO DO

1. Introduce the puppets to the students. You can set the stage for puppets in a variety of ways.
   Puppet Scenarios: Model introductory situations for the students that they can continue with you. For example, “This is Cookie the cat. Cookie wants to play but is a little afraid. Can you help her?” and “Hi I’m Freddy Frog. What is your name? What do you like to do?”
   Free Play: Students have free reign over the conversation and interactions.
   Story Retelling: Use puppets to read along or retell a story.
2. Leave the puppets out for continued use and popup Leave the puppets out for continued use and popup throughout the day. Puppets can serve as an impartial negotiator during a conflict or support a new friend in the classroom!

PLAY TIPS

- Create a group-time mascot. You can use a special pet puppet to begin the morning meeting. Seeing this puppet daily can set the tone for the day and help transition to the next activity.
- Include pet caretaker as a classroom job. Students learn about responsibility, compassion, respect, and patience as learn to care for faux classroom pets.
- Use a puppet to introduce a story. When the story is finished, the puppet can discuss the story with the students and encourage them to create an alternate ending.

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Science

X-Ray Exploration

EZ.003.LA.1018

Activity Type:
Free Choice

Objective:
Students will use scientific tools to make predictions and observations.

Exploring authentic animal X-rays encourages students to make predictions and verbalize observations. Students share the differences and similarities between mammals, reptiles, fish, amphibians, and birds as they manipulative the X-rays and respond to guided questions. Engaging in hands-on science activities allows students to witness their learning in action and gain a more profound understanding. As an educator, you can continue to set up engaging science explorations that will help students use descriptive science words and support continued language acquisition.

WHAT TO DO

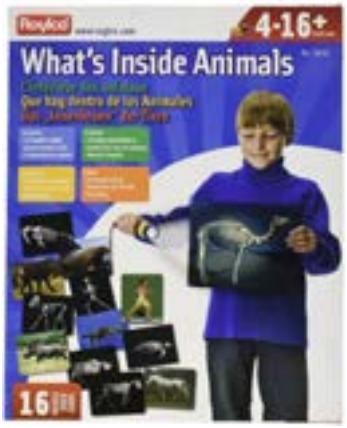
1. X-rays are a great tool for motivating students to make observations. Leave the animal X-rays out for students to match on the light wall or on a flat table. Ask students the following: “What do you notice?,” “Are there any X-rays that are surprising?,” “Are there X-rays that look the same?,” and “Are there X-rays that look very different?”
2. Use the animal flash cards to encourage students to make predictions. The double-sided flash cards include an animal image on one side and skeleton on the other, which is revealed when placed on the light board. Students can guess how many bones an animal has and check their predictions.

PLAY TIPS

- Use different sized Q-tips to recreate X-rays. Students can trace animal stencils or their own hands and feet as a base on contact paper.
- Students can use the X-rays on a vertical surface, shining the light underneath the X-ray to observe details.

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Mathematics

Taking Measurements

EZ.003.LA.1019

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will use simple measurement tools.
Students will compare the length and weight of objects.

Using realistic classroom pets and nonstandard and standard units of measurement, students begin to grasp the concept of measurement. Students can continue the notion of measuring by searching for other items in the classroom to measure. Educators can introduce and reinforce measurement related terms such as taller, shorter, heavier, and lighter which students can apply to their comparison conversations.

WHAT TO DO

1. Place the items out for students to explore. Encourage students to measure the pets' length using the non-standard tools (Unifix Cubes and math links) and standard tool (tape measure). Ask questions such as, "Which pet is the longest?," "Which pet is the shortest?," and "How are the tape measure and cubes/links different?"
2. Encourage students to use the classroom balance to compare the weight of the animals. Ask the following reflection questions: "What do you notice as you put two different animals in the balance buckets?" and "What do you think will happen if you switch them?"

PLAY TIP

Students can find other items in the classroom to measure, even themselves! Ask students to measure a friend with the standard and non-standard tools.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED











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Mathematics

Print Matching

EZ.003.LA.1020

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objective:
Students will observe details of animal and human prints.

Just like humans, pets have unique prints that help with identification. Students match the pet print to the animal and compare to their own fingerprints, focusing on similarities and differences. Activities that involve comparing and contrasting invite children to focus on details and create increasingly precise categories, which can be applied to other problem-solving situations.

WHAT TO DO

1. Ask students to look closely at the bottom of their feet and palm of their hands and describe what they see. Ask the following reflection questions: “What shapes do you see?” and “Are the bottom of your feet and palm of your hands bumpy, scaly, or smooth?” Tell students that animals have prints just like us that help with identification.
2. Pick out several pet animal tracks and create identification cards using paper. On one side, display the print, and on the other side, display the animal’s name. Students can make guesses about the animal’s identity before you turn around the card to display the animal’s name. Encourage students to explore their own fingerprints using the stamp pad, paper, and magnifying glasses. Ask, “Are there similarities between your fingerprint and any animal print?” and “What differences do you see?”

PLAY TIPS

- Leave the animal track stampers, stamp pads, and magnifying glasses out for free exploration. Students can discover the animal’s identity on their own or you can label the stamp with the animal’s identity.
- Use the plastic animals in the classroom to create additional animal prints.

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Fine and Gross Motor

Play-Doh Exploration

EZ.003.LA.1021

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objective:
Students will develop fine motor skills as they manipulate Play-Doh.
Students will build structures and artifacts with creative intention.

Using pet-themed Play-Doh manipulatives, students engage with Play-Doh in self-directed ways. Students improve hand-eye coordination, small muscle coordination, and strength by manipulating Play-Doh. Play-Doh activities are also great for encouraging creative thinking and socialization.

WHAT TO DO

Add the Play-Doh and associated materials to the free choice center. Encourage children to roll the Play-Doh, use cookie cutters and pet stamps to manipulate the Play-Doh, and any additional strategies to make pet sculptures or objects.

PLAY TIPS

- Add other materials like twigs, toothpicks, and straws cut in half; prompt students to add more detail to their structures or objects.
- Use Play-Doh to roll numbers, letters, and shapes. Draw numbers, letters, and shapes onto construction paper and encourage students to “trace” the lines with rolled Play-Doh.
- Students can make their own Play-Doh in the classroom! Combine 1 cup salt, 1 cup warm water, 2 cups flour, 1 tsp. vegetable oil, and a few drops of food coloring in a bowl, and mix.

WHAT YOU’LL NEED









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Mathematics

Pet Potluck

EZ.003.LA.1022

Activity Type:
Small Group

Objectives:
Students will practice listening and responding to directions.
Students will identify numbers quantities, and images.

In this cooking center, students take on the role of chefs preparing a variety of simple dishes. Using recipe cards with pictures and numbers, they gather themed ingredients and add the correct amounts to their pot or bowl. As they scoop, count, and mix, children practice number recognition, matching quantities, and following step-by-step directions. This activity blends dramatic play, sensory exploration, and early math skills into a flexible, collaborative cooking experience that can be adapted to any classroom theme.

WHAT TO DO

1. Ask students to dress up as chefs using aprons and chef hats, then choose a stew recipe card that shows the ingredients and how many to add. Using scoops or their hands, have students count out the ingredients and place them into the pot or bowl.
2. Once the stew is finished, students can pretend to cook, stir, and serve it. After making their stew, they invite a friend to sing a stew song or pretend to serve their creation.

PLAY TIPS

- **Create a New Recipe:** Students design their own stew recipe card by choosing ingredients and deciding how many to add.
- **Chef Teamwork:** One student reads or shows the recipe while another chef gathers and counts the ingredients.
- **Taste Test Station:** Students present their stew to classmates who count the ingredients together before “tasting.”

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