

# Top Ten Collections

The best collections include items that children are really interested in, so observations of children's current enthusiasms will offer lots of clues. Children could be interested in the same things as their parents or grandparents, like stamps, cards or coins, or items that reflect popular culture like the latest movie or TV show. Early years settings all have collections of high quality small world play resources which support maths too, including: cars, boats, animals, mini-beasts, trains and more. Children need collections of objects that can be sorted in a variety of ways – interesting objects that can be explored, moved, played with, talked about and organized. Children also need access to bags, trays, baskets, stacking boxes and other containers that make organization of collections easier.

## **Natural objects – pebbles, shells, conkers, twigs**

Children can explore a variety of natural objects, making regular and irregular arrangements, filling and emptying boxes and bags and sorting in a variety of ways.

## **Number rhyme props**

Many settings buy sets of 5 identical 'ducks' or 'frogs' to support favourite number rhymes. But a collection of very different ducks – of different sizes, materials, colours, patterns and styles, including wood, fabric, plastic, metal toys, puppets and ornaments is of greater value. Children can explore, compare and talk about the fascinating collections.

## **Boxes**

Many children love filling and emptying containers, and this offers a chance to explore 2D and 3D shapes. Sets of stacking boxes, alongside tiny empty boxes, huge cardboard boxes and assorted wooden and metal boxes can delight children. Children love to flatten boxes, and empty card boxes can be cut and flattened so that children can reconstruct them with tape. Give children chances to cover boxes too, by completely wrapping them in paper like parcels.

## **Buttons, beads or badges**

Many adults remember playing with their granny's button tin and young children today will enjoy the experience. Ensure there are lots of different sizes, colours, patterns and materials. Watch as children explore, sort, organize and talk together. Empty biscuit boxes, chocolate boxes and egg boxes with divided trays can enhance the experience with collections of small objects.

## **Socks and gloves**

Socks, gloves, shoes and boots give children the opportunity to think about pairs of objects. Stretchy gloves and mittens, filled with damp sand stretch and stimulate discussions about size. Odd socks promote talk about 'the same as' and 'different from'. Shoes and shoe boxes encourage talk about things that are 'too big' and 'too small' and ordering by size.

## **Bottles**

A collection of bottles of different sizes, shapes and colours, some with lids, will give children different opportunities to investigate materials and 'full' and 'empty'. Water and dry sand can be poured into bottles through funnels and children can predict which bottles are the same or

similar sizes. Try making some holes in some bottles too and see what happens as the water is poured in.

### **Balls and spheres**

All children love to play with balls and this collection can include spherical objects that roll but don't bounce. The collection can be played with generally and also used to roll through water or thin paint to show the tracks made. Why do spherical objects make straight tracks?

### **Den making resources**

Many children like to hide in dens and these children often like to make their own dens too. Den making materials can include fabric strips, sheets, shower curtains, huge boxes, clips to fix fabric, cushions, rugs, carpets square and something to make a frame. Very simple dens can be made by hanging fabric over a table.

### **Treasure, including bangles, necklaces and beads**

Children generally like shiny and glittery things, including 'treasure'. Make a collection of junk jewelry, 'gold nuggets', 'gems', shiny stones, coins, bangles, beads and chunky fake rings in a treasure chest. Try hiding some treasure in dry sand with sieves, tongs and large tweezers to search for 'buried treasure'.

### **Key rings**

Key rings come in all shapes and sizes and children can spend lots of time exploring them, playing and sorting and organizing them in different ways. Some children may like to use them with locks and keys too.