

Minibeast maths

Focus on a range of maths skills as you find out about the features of different minibeasts

Ladybird spots

Stepping Stone: select the correct numeral to represent 1 to 5, then 1 to 9, objects (MD).

Early Learning Goal: recognise numerals 1 to 9 (MD).

Group size: small groups.

What you need

Red and green card; scissors; black marker pens; numbered or dotted dice.

What to do

- Cut 12 ovals from the red card and explain that these represent ladybirds. Share them out and ask the children to use a black marker to draw up to six spots on each ladybird.
- Cut a large leaf outline from green card and lay it on the floor. Ask the children to sit around it.
- Show the children a dice and point to the different dots or numbers. Encourage them to say the numbers out loud and hold up the corresponding number of fingers.
- Invite the children to take turns to throw the dice. If it shows, for example, three dots (or number 3), that child should choose a ladybird showing three spots and pass the dice on.



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- If there are no ladybirds with three spots, the child misses that turn. Continue playing until all the ladybirds have flown away and the leaf is bare.

Support and extension

Write the corresponding number on to each ladybird alongside the spots to help younger children. Encourage older children to add the total number of spots on their ladybirds to see who has the highest score.

Caterpillar patterns

Stepping Stone: show an interest in shape and space by playing with shapes or making arrangements with objects (MD).

Early Learning Goal: talk about, recognise and recreate simple patterns (MD).

Group size: small groups.

What you need

Colouring materials; scissors; A4 paper; pictures of caterpillars.

Preparation

On a sheet of A4 paper draw four caterpillars, each with a different number of body sections (up to ten) and each a different length. Photocopy one sheet for each child.

What to do

- Look at the caterpillar pictures together. Notice that they have long bodies and lots of tiny legs.

- Give each child a photocopied sheet. Count how many body segments there are on each caterpillar. Which has the most segments? Which has the fewest?
- Demonstrate how to colour one of the caterpillar's body segments using a recurring pattern, for example, blue, red, yellow, blue, red, yellow. Encourage the children to create their own recurring pattern. What colours will they use, and in what order? Will all the caterpillars on their sheet have the same pattern?
- Once the children have coloured in their caterpillars, talk about the colours that they chose. Which colour was used the most?

Support and extension

Let younger children use just two or three primary colours. Invite older children to cut their caterpillars into segments and add and take away to make their caterpillars grow and shrink.

Home links

- Encourage parents to explore the number eight with their child. Ask them to go on a 'number eight hunt' at home, or help their child sort objects into groups of eight.

Further ideas

- Sort plastic minibeasts into hoops. Encourage the children to suggest how the creatures should be sorted, for example, by colour or number of wings.
- Create a 'patternpillar' number line, starting with a short caterpillar with one body segment, then longer caterpillars, up to ten. Invite the children to number the parts and display the patternpillar in your maths area.
- Count the legs on the creatures on the A3 poster in this issue.

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