

All of a twitter

Focus on textures and sounds with these hands-on activities all about baby birds

Nest builders

Stepping Stone: experiment to create different textures (CD).

Early Learning Goal: explore colour, texture, shape, form and space in two and three dimensions (CD).

Group size: four children.

What you need

Natural materials such as twigs, feathers, moss and leaves; plastic garden netting; string; card; paint; paintbrushes; collage materials; play dough; scissors; glue.

What to do

- Talk about birds' nests with the children. Why do birds build nests? How do they make them?
- Tell the children that they are going to use different materials to make their own nests.
- Help them to cut circles of garden netting, approximately 25cm in diameter. Pull the sides of the netting up to make a nest shape, and secure with lengths of string.

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- Encourage the children to weave the different natural materials through the netting. Talk about the different textures and effects that the children achieve.

- Let the children make eggs and chicks for their nests from the card, collage materials or play dough.

- Encourage the children to experiment with different effects, such as dripping paint on to card egg-shapes, or adding collage materials to a play-dough chick for a feather effect.

- Display your nests and eggs on a table and let the children add to them as they find other textured materials.

Support and extension

Play alongside younger children and help them to manipulate the materials to achieve their aims. Encourage older children to collect additional materials from their garden or around your setting.

Home links

- Invite parents to help their children to collect materials suitable for the nest-building activity.

- Ask parents to listen for and talk about bird-song when they are out and about with their children.

Two little dicky birds

Stepping Stone: sing to themselves and make up simple songs (CD).

Early Learning Goal: recognise and explore how sounds can be changed, sing simple songs from memory, recognise repeated sounds and sound patterns and match movements to music (CD).

Group size: up to eight children.

What you need

Two large sheets of tissue paper; four metal spoons; two shakers.

Preparation

Familiarise yourself with the traditional rhyme 'Two Little Dicky Birds'.

What to do

- Sing the rhyme with the children using the traditional finger actions.

- Ask the children how they could use the paper to make a 'fly away' sound, for example, waft it, blow on it or scrunch it up.

- Say the rhyme again together, this time inviting two children to add the 'fly away' sounds at the appropriate points.

- Experiment with the spoons and the shakers.

- Ask the children how the baby birds might be feeling, for example, hungry, tired or excited.

- Change the rhyme to fit the children's ideas, for example, 'Two baby birds sitting in the nest, one all excited and the other one sleepy, fly away Peter, sleep tight Paul, come back Peter, wake up Paul'.

Support and extension

Vary the rhyme by using younger children's own names, and encourage them to imitate the actions. Let older children add the names of different types of birds to the rhyme, such as robin and wren, instead of Peter and Paul.

Further ideas

- Look at pictures of different eggs, and try to recreate the colours and patterns using sponge and bubble painting.

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