Information Sheet

Shoebox Activities for Nurseries & Pre-schools (with ideas)

A shoe-box activity is an **achievable** adult-led activity that enables the child to access and complete an adult-led activity based on their individual needs.

This shoebox activity is immediately followed by an activity that is motivating for the child - their reward.

For this to be successful, both the shoebox and motivating activities should only be available and 'special' for this activity. If the shoe-box activity or the motivating activity are within the environment, the child could quickly become less interested.

The shoebox can be **any** box, with a lid, that is approximately the same size as a shoebox, for example:

Please note: If you do not have any "shoe-box" size containers, the activity can also be stored in other containers/pouches with a similar contents size, e.g. zipped wallets.

Remember:

- When planning a shoe-box activity - always think about the child's interests and their current development stage (not their actual age).

- Be organised - get everything ready in advance.

- Be clear what you want the child to do, and when the activity will be finished/completed, for example: adding the rest of the 4 piece puzzle, pulling all 6 pompoms from the whisk, etc.

- Choose the right moment - think about when the best time for this to be successful.

- Use minimal language. Ensure that the language is relevant to the child's level of understanding as well as their current development stage (not their actual age). Use key words, for example: now and next.

- Use Visual Supports alongside minimal language - that is relevant to the child's current development stage (not their actual age). This will be, **real objects of reference**, **photos of real objects** and/or **symbols**. Use 'Now and Next' or 'First and Then' approach.

- The child will also need advanced notice that this activity is coming up - this is usually 5 minutes notice using visual supports and a sand timer or similar.

For information regarding Visual Supports:

Go to, www.fiveacrewood.co.uk and select the **STLS/OUTREACH** tab.

Scroll down and select **Early Years**.

Scroll down to **Useful Information** where you will find the following list.

> Visual Supports - **1** Using Real Objects of Reference
> Visual Supports - **2** Using Real Objects to Make Choices
> Visual Supports - **3** Using Real Objects to support "Now & Next"
> Visual Supports - **4** Using Photos of Real Objects
> Visual Supports - **5** Using Photos to Make Choices
> Visual Supports - **6** Using Photos to Make Requests
> Visual Supports - **7** Using Photos to support "Now & Next"
> Visual Supports - **8** Personal Visual Timetable
> **These are best viewed in numerical order**

## How to:

To start with, the shoe-box activity must be achievable and very short. This may start with as little as 10 seconds, and then slowly increased over time.

A simple way to keep an activity short is for the child to finish an activity that has been partially completed in advance.

For example - use a simple 4 piece puzzle where there is only 1 final piece to add.

- Remember to be clear what you want the child to do, and once the activity will be finished.

- Remember to use Visual Supports and minimal language.

- Once the child has added this final piece, the adult-led activity has been successfully completed - if the child needs adult support to complete the activity, use the hand-over-hand method.

- The adult praises the child and **immediately** gives them the motivating activity. If the motivating activity is open ended and has no obvious end, be clear how long the child will have with their motivating activity. Use a sand timer or similar.

- Before increasing the difficultly of the shoe-box activity, allow the child to be successful on several different occasions to support their understanding and build their confidence - this will depend on the child's current development stage.

- The next step is to make the shoe-box activity longer, for example, leaving 2 final pieces to add to the puzzle, and so on.
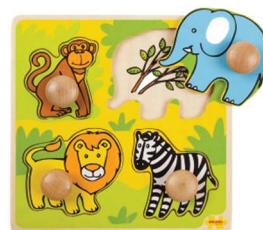
Shoe-box Activity Ideas:

Remember: Always think about the child's current development stage and their interests.

Puzzles:

This can be as simple as cutting a picture into 2 or 3 pieces. Or by leaving just 1 puzzle piece to add, and then increase over time.

Sorting Numbers:

For example, magnetic numbers, foam numbers or cut out of paper or card. Cut out numbered carriages to make a train. Make a number wheel for the child to add the correct numbered pegs.

Shape sorter, playdough activity, instructions for creations with bricks, posting activities, removing pom-poms from a hand whisk using fingers or tweezers, **and many, many more…**

To help you to make a start, some of the following can be downloaded and printed from the Five Acre Wood website:

- Go to: www.fiveacrewood.co.uk and select the **STLS/OUTREACH** tab
- Scroll down and select **Early Years**
- Scroll down to **Useful Information** and these are under **Shoe box activities**.

Matching Activities:

Available to download and print:
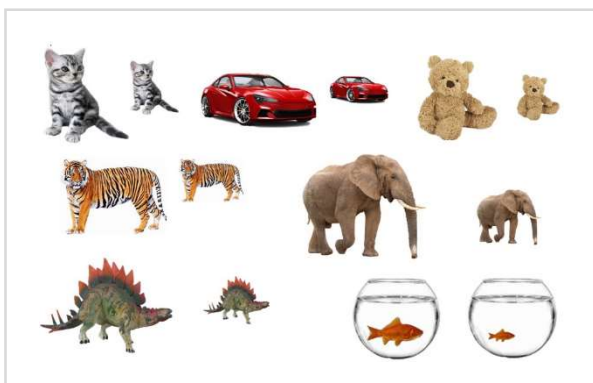

'Shoe-box Activities - ideas - Animal Matching Game'

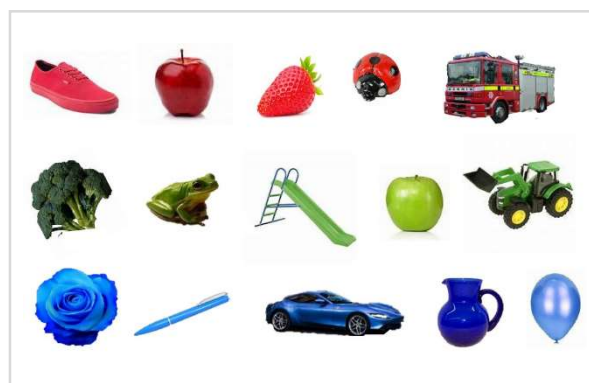'Shoe-box Activities - ideas - Vehicle Matching Game'

Sorting Activities - ideas:

Available to download and print:

'Shoe-box Activities - ideas - Big and Small'

'Shoe-box Activities - ideas - Colour Sorting'

Remember: Always think about the child's current stage of development and their interests.