

TABLETOP ACTIVITIES



Tabletop activities such as games and puzzles provide opportunities for children to enhance their executive function skills, including working memory, flexible thinking and impulse control.

Children can engage in both critical and lateral thinking, learning how to play games, follow rules, problem solve and develop strategies that can help them succeed. For example, when working on a jigsaw, a beneficial strategy may be to collect and organise the edges first.

Whilst participating in tabletop activities, children can work with others, develop social skills that enable them to build positive relationships, take turns, understand boundaries, and recognise social cues.

Games and puzzles can support children to develop their capacity for self-regulation, perseverance, and resilience as they face different challenges. This includes learning how to cope with the frustration of landing on a snake instead of a ladder.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

Tabletop activities promote learning around caring, sharing, turn-taking and fairness, which are central to the development of positive relationships. Children can learn to respect their own and others' rights.

Games support children to explore concepts of winning and losing, developing strategies to understand and cope with disappointment, frustration, and unexpected outcomes.

Through picking-up and manipulating game pieces using the pincer or Palmer grip, children develop hand-eye coordination, dexterity and fine-motor skills.



Literacy

Through participating in conversations and discussions during tabletop activities, children discover new words and phrases which can help them to express ideas, thoughts and feelings.

Each activity can help children develop different literacy skills, ranging from: listening skills when playing a 'Sound Lotto' game, new vocabulary when playing a 'Shopping List' game, or developing pre-reading skills through recognising sounds, letters, or rhyming.

Games provide opportunities for children to listen attentively to rules and instructions, developing understanding before conveying this information to others.

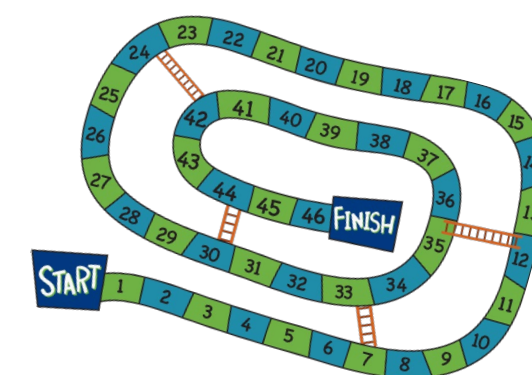
Maths & Numeracy

Tabletop activities afford children a range of rich opportunities to explore and develop understanding of maths and numeracy concepts.

Dice support the development of conceptual understanding of subitising: recognising that a pattern arrangement of 5 dots represents the number 5. Dominoes promote understanding of partitioning: collections can be separated into parts. For example, 3 and 3 make 6.

When counting spaces in Snakes & Ladders, children engage in one-to-one correspondence, recognising that each space receives one count and one count only. Additionally, they enable children to experience the use of positional language, e.g., "move forwards/backwards."

Jigsaws and puzzles can support understanding of shape, size, space and pattern. Children can experiment with different ways that shapes can fit together and use spatial reasoning to imagine what something may look like when rotated or flipped.



ROLE OF THE ADULT

When games are introduced, practitioners should support children to set-up and play. This ensures that children can understand the game's rules, purpose and aim. Through modelling and scaffolding, practitioners can support children to understand turn-taking, problem-solving, and how to follow game sequences.



Practitioners should possess firm understanding of the learning intention behind the tabletop activities offered. Are these developmentally appropriate? Do they follow children's interests? Do they provide suitable challenge?

Adults can support children to understand and manage their emotions. Through engaging in discussion surrounding attitudes towards winning and losing, practitioners can help children foster resilience, perseverance and a sense of responsibility.

Tabletop games require children to manage multiple concepts, restrictions and boundaries. Practitioners should be aware of these, understanding that they may be required to support children through co-regulation of emotions.

Prior to offering games and puzzles, it's essential to ensure that all resources/components are complete with no missing pieces. Resources on offer should be refreshed and replenished regularly.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

Ideally, tabletop activities should be located in a low-traffic area to ensure that children can focus and remain uninterrupted. This should be an adequately sized area that enables a number of children to play games in a group.

In some instances, games or puzzles may require a larger space. Identify a suitable area where activities can be transported to, such as the floor.

It's important that games and activities have a dedicated, clearly labelled, and well-organised storage area.



RESOURCE IDEAS

- Appropriately sized table and chairs
- Adequate accessible storage
- Small selection of developmentally appropriate puzzles/games
- Traditional board games, e.g., Snakes & Ladders
- Dominoes & dice

REFLECTION POINTS

- In what ways can practitioners support children to take responsibility for the games and puzzles that they use?
- How do practitioners ensure that all developmental stages are catered for? To what extent do practitioners observe and reflect on how children engage with the games and puzzles on offer? Do these provide appropriate challenge?
- Can children exercise choice surrounding the games/puzzles that they use? Are there opportunities to explore the options available?

Remember!

In order to effectively support children's engagement with subitising, it's recommended to always have either a dice or domino game on offer.

