

# Professional Development Resources

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## Using collections January 2012

Collections of simple everyday objects provide excellent starting points for exploration and investigation. They are interesting to put together, inexpensive, and can be linked to all areas of learning in the EYFS framework. In addition they make good use of open ended resources which pose questions and encourage curiosity.

### Planning a collection

You can use collections to support whatever planning processes you have adopted in your setting. For example, you may want your collection to be central to a science/understanding the world based topic, support a theme or to enrich children's everyday experiences.

### Using collections in a science/understanding the world based topic

- **Toys** - try using a collection of toys that move in different ways, or toys that make a noise.
- **Clothes** – make a collection of hats or shoes.
- **Food** – put together a collection of kitchen tools that shape, squash or measure.

### Using collections in theme based planning

Throughout the year, some themes or strands of learning regularly recur. Collections can be used to support themes which are of particular interest to children, or which develop particular skills and understanding.

For example:

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Moving things:</b>  | make a collection of wheeled vehicles  |
| <b>Colour:</b>         | create a collection of fabric and paper samples or paint shade cards             |
| <b>Sorting things:</b> | use a collection of buttons that can be sorted using several different criteria. |

### Using collections to enrich everyday experiences

Collections can be used to enrich the children's day to day experiences by providing stimulating resources to engage their attention and encourage curiosity and communication. Used in this way collections will fuel children's imagination and enrich the quality of learning in day to day activities.

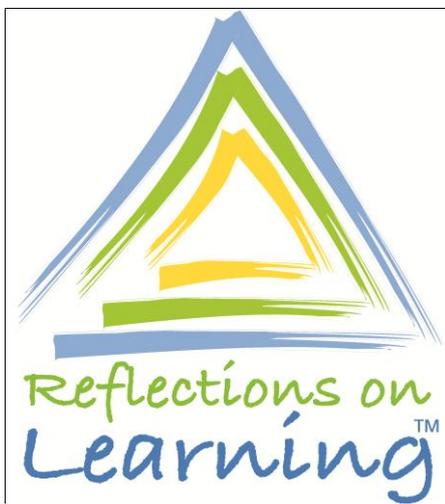
As an example you could put together collections to support these different activities in your setting:

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Water and sand play:</b>        | a collection of things with holes      |
| <b>Role play and storytelling:</b> | a collection of boxes, large and small |
| <b>Outdoor play:</b>               | a collection of things that roll.      |

### Putting your collection together

The variety of objects you will want to include in one of your collections will go beyond the range of everyday toys and equipment which are usually available to children in an early years setting. When selecting items to include you need to apply the same criteria as you would for any other resources used by the children. They should be clean, well maintained and safe for children to handle.

Make sure that both children and adults are aware that the resources in the collection are something special, to be used in a particular way, and not toys for everyday use. Reinforcing this message will help to preserve the integrity of the collection you have worked so hard to assemble and will retain the interest and excitement which using the collection should invoke. Think about how you store your collection. Choosing an appropriate box or other lidded container will add the interest and excitement of exploring the collection.



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## Using collections to encourage exploration and investigation

Collections of everyday things can be used as starting points for developing the many different skills associated with exploration and investigation.

For example, using a collection of leaves children can:

- Observe – look closely at shape, size, pattern and texture;
- Raise questions – ‘Why are some leaves bigger than others?’
- Hypothesise and predict– ‘All tall trees have big leaves’.
- Investigate – explore trees and investigate the size, arrangement, colour and texture of their leaves
- Interpret and share their findings – through talking, drawing, painting, photographs.

## Communication and multisensory exploration

Putting together and investigating collections provides lots of different opportunities for children to develop their skills in close observation, using all their senses, not just their sense of sight.

They can investigate the sound, smell and texture of objects, notice fine detail and develop their vocabulary as they describe similarities and differences.

Thinking of questions to ask encourages children to be curious and to begin to take responsibility for their own learning.

While hypothesising and predicting children are developing their ability to think logically.

Through investigating and sharing their findings they learn to express their ideas and thoughts clearly and to listen to the ideas and theories of others.

## Some examples of using collections

### A collection of shoes

A shoe shop in the role play area could contain the following collection of shoes:

- Made from different materials – leather, plastic, fabric, rubber
- With different fastenings – laces, Velcro, buckles, elastic
- Of different sizes – baby shoes, large size adult shoes
- For different purposes – boots, trainers, flip flops
- With different soles – smooth leather, ridged rubber
- For particular purposes – ballet shoes, tap shoes, football boots, wellingtons.

The shoe collection will provide lots of opportunities to look at the properties of materials, the use of different materials for different purposes, how materials are fixed together and how different types of fastenings work.

They can be matched, sorted and ordered by size, or by other properties.

Children can use their imagination to make up and act out stories about who might wear the different shoes.

Storing the collection attractively – in shoe boxes of different sizes for example - will add enormously to its appeal and encourage children to treat it with respect. Putting photographs of the shoes on the front of the box will encourage recognition, matching and sorting.

### Collections of natural materials

A collection of natural materials costs very little to make and is a wonderful way of drawing children’s attention to the wonder of the world around them. Attractively displayed this can become an interesting feature of your setting, to be used and added to over time. Your collection may start by reflecting your local area, comprising:

- leaves, grasses, twigs, bark, stones, feathers, seed pods and cones  
and be added to over time with interesting examples from further afield:
- shells, sand, polished stones, skeleton leaves, oddly shaped roots and branches, giant seed pods, cones and dried fruits.

Remember that as well as using the collection of natural materials to support children’s understanding and skills in science and technology, it also provides a wonderful starting point for creative expression, mathematical and language development