

Stones are naturally tactile and appealing to children, and this set of stones in twelve colours and three sizes brings the colours of nature into small world, sand and water play. Children will find many ways to play with this open-ended resource, enjoying their smooth feel and the satisfaction of building stacks with them. They are ideal for enhancing many different small world settings and creating a natural environment for many kinds of animals.

Stone explorations

The stones are so tactile, you might like to put them in a feely bag for children to explore by touch:

- Can the children guess what might be in the bag?
- What do they feel like?
- What words could they use to describe them?
- Take turns to pull a stone out of the bag and describe its colour. What else can they think of that is the same colour?



Give the children opportunities to explore the stones independently:

- They might start stacking them straight away, or maybe the stones will be interpreted as characters (such as 'daddy', 'sister' and 'baby').
- Listen out for mathematical language that you can build on, such as heavier, bigger or tallest (stack).
- Whilst enjoying stacking the stones, children will be developing their fine motor skills as they make their own discoveries about weight and balance.
- Children might start arranging the stones into patterns – you could take the opportunity to talk about any repeating patterns that appear.

Children could be encouraged to sort the stones:

- into groups by colour
- into groups by size
- into groups by weight
- in order from smallest to largest
- in order from lightest to heaviest

If you have a traditional set of weighing scales, you could see what combination of stones will balance the scales and talk about which groups weigh more or less.

The stones are also ideal for supporting simple number activities, such as:

- counting
- adding or taking away
- exploring number bonds



Nature stones play

The stones can form part of an open-ended collection of resources for the children to play with indoors and out, going wherever their imagination takes them. This could be in a sand tray, as children enjoy burying and uncovering the stones, in a loose parts collection or in a treasure basket alongside other objects with interesting textures, such as pine cones, sponges, seashells, fabrics, feathers and wooden items.

A selection of stones in the appropriate colours can help to create a landscape for any number of small world play invitations, such as:



- in the sand tray, to create a desert home for animals such as snakes, spiders, scorpions, lizards, meerkats or camels
- nestled in moss on a forest floor, among trees made from sticks stuck in mud or dough and various woodland animals
- on a rocky mountainside, created using a large cone (or Play Volcano) covered in grey dough, populated by mountain goats, snow leopards, wolves, bears or eagles
- on the seabed in a water tray, alongside fish and other sea creatures
- on a beach in the sand tray, with crabs, turtles, shells and seaweed, and maybe a rock pool or two
- in a habitat for creepy crawlies, with moss, sticks, leaves, pine cones and bark

After creating an animal habitat, find out more about the animals native to it using videos, books and pictures. You might like to link this to other animal resources, such as Yellow Door's Footprint Stones.

Get talking – useful words

smooth, round, flat, sort, groups, order,
bigger/biggest, smaller/smallest, heavier/heaviest,
lighter/lightest, taller/tallest, shorter/shortest

