



# Socks

Using everyday language to talk about size, weight, capacity and volume  
Counting reliably



**Children often enjoy** playing with their clothing and filling all sorts of things with sand and other objects.

**Adults could** provide a large collection of random socks and leave them in various places in the environment.

## The Activity

Leave a variety of socks around the setting, some paired, some odd. Good places to place them might include, for example, in the sand pit/tray or amongst small world play figures such as dinosaurs, people ... This might encourage children to experiment with filling the socks with different materials/objects. Other children might enjoy trying to sort and/or pair the socks.

## Encouraging mathematical thinking and reasoning:

### Describing

Tell me about these (socks).  
What have you done with these (socks)?

### Reasoning

What do you think might happen if we put in more sand/more dinosaurs/more ...?  
Can we sort them in a different way?

### Opening out

What could you put into that sock instead?  
What do you think will happen? Why?

### Recording

Would you like to remember this by taking a photo?  
How can we remember which sock goes where? (when sorting or ordering)

# The Mathematical Journey

## Shape, space and measure

- Using their own language to describe shapes
- Talking about patterning and design (how a pair match)

## Same and different

- Developing the use of language to compare and contrast, for example, a sock filled with dinosaurs compared with a sock filled with sand

## Counting

- Counting actions
- Saying one number for each object (e.g. when counting dinosaurs in a sock)
- Estimating the number of objects and checking by counting
- Beginning to use vocabulary involved in adding

## Development and Variation

This playful situation could lead to a variety of mathematical conversations, depending on what the children choose to do. Counting may play a part (cupfuls of sand to fill a sock/number of small dinosaurs to fill a sock) but equally, a sock filled with sand can lead to the use of interesting words to describe its shape.



Some children may be keen to pair the socks and/or sort them in various ways and you could set up scenarios to encourage this if that is where their interest lies, perhaps by involving characters from recently-read stories/rhymes or toys in the setting.

The NRICH Early Years activity 'Washing Line' could be linked to this one.

## Resources

A collection of socks, including some 'odd' ones.

A sand pit/tray with objects that could be used as scoops.

Small dinosaurs/small world toys etc. that could be used to fill up a sock.

Equipment to record what children say/discover.

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