



Wrapping Parcels

Sorting and describing
Understanding the characteristics of 3D shapes



Children often enjoy wrapping and unwrapping parcels as part of their imaginary play, or in a real situation such as a birthday or other celebration.

Adults could build on this by setting up a role play corner as a post office, where children can experiment with wrapping boxes ready to post.

The Activity

Talk about the jobs a postman does and set up the role play corner as a post office. Offer resources for the 'customers' to wrap parcels ready for posting. Sticky labels can be used for children to record the recipient's name (and address) and pretend stamps in different numerical amounts could be available.

Encouraging mathematical thinking and reasoning:

Describing

Which box will you choose to wrap? What will you need?
What will you put inside? Is that enough/too many?
How are you going to wrap it?
Tell me how you wrapped it – what did you do first?

Reasoning

Which paper shall we choose? Is this big enough? How do you know?
How much shall we cut off?
Which way round shall we wrap it?
How much sticky tape will we need?

Opening out

Is it a surprise?
How will we know who it's for?
How will we know what's inside?

Recording

What a big/tiny/colourful parcel you've made!
How much does it weigh?
Do you want to make a label for it?
Who is it for?

The Mathematical Journey

Same and different

- the language of comparison e.g. bigger, smaller, taller, longer, shorter, wider, narrower ...

Position and spatial properties

- using words such as under, over, round, sideways, on top, inside, outside ...

Properties of shapes

- developing language to describe the parcels e.g. edge, corner, side, top, bottom ...

Number

- using symbols appropriately on labels to describe, for example, weight or house number

Development and Variation

During a school year there are lots of opportunities to fill and wrap parcels. Birthdays or other celebrations are an obvious context but you could create less time-dependent activities by suggesting a birthday party for a toy such as a teddy. What might Teddy like? Offer differently-sized boxes and possible gifts or let the children choose their own, put it in a box and wrap it up. They could add a label to show who it is from.

Some children may have played 'Pass the Parcel' at parties. Suggest that they make their own pass the parcel with a surprise at the end and use these for a real game.

The role play corner could become a shop - offer resources so that the shopkeepers can wrap bought items.

You could link to the NRICH EYFS activity "Presents" where the focus is on relative weights.

Story, rhyme and song links

Mister Magnolia by Quentin Blake



Resources

Cuboidal boxes of different sizes/shapes (you could include other shapes but cuboidal are easiest to begin with)

Sticky tape, string/ribbon of different lengths, labels (sticky/tie-on)

Wrapping paper - this could be patterned or plain which could be decorated before/ later

Safety scissors

Other decorative items e.g. bows, stickers etc.

