Tip Number Ten: Using everyday resources to support learning

Children often learn best when they have tactile resources they can explore, particularly at the beginning of their school journey. At school, this may take the form of various manipulatives such as counters, cubes, Numicon, counting bears or coloured shapes. Your house has a wealth of everyday items that can be used for home learning in exactly the same way. Below is a selection of example activities you can do in or around your home without having to locate additional resources.

Maths activities

Everyday items are perfect for exploring shape, space and measure with your child. Below is a selection of activities that could be completed with common household objects.

Certain household items are really good for exploring arrays and grouping e.g. egg boxes, chocolate boxes, tomatoes on the vine and many more. You could then pose problem solving questions – I have two egg boxes. How many eggs do I have altogether? Could you tell me what is double 6?

Explore 3D shape by using objects from around your house e.g. tins, cereal boxes, yoghurt pots, ice cream cones and absolutely anything else you can think of. You could take a few tins of food out of the cupboard and talk about how we can see a circle face on each end. You can then trace each can on a piece of paper and ask your child to match the cans to the traced circles.

In the bathroom, the children can experiment with measurement by transferring water between different sized containers in the bath. The bathroom scales can be used to measure heavier objects.

Take a look at a bookcase. Can they estimate how many books they think there might be? It could take a while to check their answers!

STEM activities

Cooking is a fantastic, everyday way to explore STEM concepts with children. You can learn about weighing and measuring ingredients, explore how different food change during the

cooking process and even use cutlery to measure other household items in non-standard units. How many forks wide is the fridge? How many spoons wide is the doorway? You can ask the children to make predictions before measuring and then complete the activity to see if they were right.

Explore everyday materials with items available in your home. Teach or recap the properties of everyday materials such as wood, glass, plastic, metal, water and rock.

There are a range of simple Science experiments using everyday items that you can have fun with at home. Have a look at this link for some examples: https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/parenting/g32176446/science-experiments-for-kids/

Make a nature collection

Natural resources encourage children to observe closely and use all their senses. Providing an ever-changing environment is an ideal way for children to develop their curiosity and understanding through asking questions, learning about new ideas and concepts and talking about things they have discovered. Building up a collection of natural resources can begin with a selection of resources found in your immediate environment. These could include:

- A variety of leaves of different colours, shades, patterns, textures and scents
- Shells of varying shapes, sizes, colours and patterns
- Bark and twigs from a variety of trees
- Fruits and vegetables that are interesting to look at and handle
- Seeds of different sizes, shapes and colours
- Pebbles or stones

This collection can then be used in a variety of ways. Loose parts are excellent for counting and other mathematical problems, so why not give the children the collection of stones or seeds to use for their maths activity instead of counters or cubes.

Natural materials such as twigs, bark, leaves, pebbles and moss can be used to enhance your child's small word play. Encourage them to create small environments for dinosaurs, farm animals, wild animals or small characters.

Natural materials can also be used creatively to produce designs and collages. All that is required is a selection of resources and an area in which to produce the design e.g. on the floor, in a tuff tray or an oversized piece of paper. The resources can be changed around and mixed in different ways, and then packed away at the end of session to use another time.