

National Storytelling Week

Thursday - Small World Stories

Add an imaginative twist to small world play either indoors or outdoors with this landscape and layout activity. This activity gives a focus to problem solving to encourage children's development of shape, space and positional language.

Resources:

- A main character, like a puppet or cuddly toy
- A variety of small world items like figures, animals and dinosaurs
- Material like throws, ribbons or scarves
- Wooden blocks or plastic bricks
- Loose parts like shells, wooden discs, pebbles, twigs and leaves
- Recyclable items like yogurt pots, cardboard boxes and bottle tops
- Masking tape for connecting parts together.



Activity:

- Choose your main character; this could be a cuddly toy or a puppet, and gather a selection of items from the resource list
- Either indoors or outdoors, set up a starting point for your story, for example, a blanket to represent a bed as if your character has just woken up
- Introduce your character to the children including the character's name, how they are feeling and what the character plans to do next.

It might look and sound something like this:

"This is Hugo the bear. He's just woken up from a long winter nap and is looking for an adventure. Hugo wants to go for a walk, but there's no path. How could we build a long path for Hugo? Let's make a path out of these wooden blocks, but how many will I need? (Laying the blocks out and counting as you go). 1..2..3..4..5..6..7, that's seven blocks altogether. (Walking the bear along the path) Hugo can walk down the road. Oh dear! (Adding a blue piece of material), Hugo has reached the sea and he wants to go across to the other side. Hugo can't swim, how will he get across? Let's make a boat for Hugo (using cardboard boxes or recyclable containers). How big should we make it? Sit inside this box Hugo. Oops! Hugo is too big for this box; we need a bigger box to fit Hugo inside. Can any children help me?"

- Your character's adventure is organic; it grows with each suggestion you or the children make
- Remember to include problems to solve that encourage children to build bridges, steps, walls and enclosures. For example, "Hugo is walking across the huge, hot plains of Africa and comes across a hungry lion. How can we save Hugo? Could we build a wall to keep him safe?"
- Focus your language on key concepts like big, little, tall, short and language of position like in, out, next to, beside, over, under, in front, behind, near and far
- Remember when counting to confirm the cardinal number to children, for example "1..2..3..4..5..6..7, that's seven blocks altogether"
- Once children feel confident with the activity, invite them to share their own characters adventure.





Extension Opportunity:

Map out the adventure the character took using paper and mark making resources. Encourage children to reflect on the sequence of events, for example, "First Hugo the bear woke up, then we made a long path out of seven blocks all the way to the sea. What happened to Hugo next?" Remember to revisit and model positional language as children map the adventure. These maps could be kept together and made into a book for children to revisit, recreate and share their characters adventures with peers and parents/carers.

Top Tip:

To build staff confidence, you could start with something simpler. Use the classic and much loved 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' story as the adventure. Move around your outdoor space going through the different landscapes until you reach the bear cave. For inspiration on how to deliver the story, watch Michael Rosen himself read aloud here : [Michael Rosen We're Going On A Bear Hunt - Kids' Poems and Stories With Michael Rosen - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ug8uUWUWUWU)



Activities with children must always be risk assessed. Children must have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.