

This set of appealing category stones has been carefully designed to develop children’s sorting skills – important for early mathematical development. By studying the attributes of the cats, they can be grouped by body tone and ear/eye/tail type. Children will enjoy discussing the similarities and differences between them, and developing descriptive vocabulary. Additional mathematical vocabulary can be introduced as the children engage with the stones, allowing for words relating to shape, position, pattern, sequences, and spatial reasoning to be explored.



Sort by tone (4)



Sort by types of tail (4)



Sort by types of ear (2)



Sort by types of eye (4)

Key vocabulary

The shape and style of the cats’ eyes, ears and tails lend themselves to using words such as curved, straight, circle/circular, triangle/triangular, while the layout of groups of cats will allow for positional language to be explored.

- Sort
- Compare
- Similarities
- Differences
- The same as
- Different from
- Category/Categories
- Classify

Games you can play

- **Kim's Game:** Show the children a selection of different Categories stones before placing a cloth over them. Remove one of the stones in secret, take off the cloth, and ask the children to identify and describe which stone is no longer there. Swap roles so that a child leads the game. This will promote cooperative play.
- **Guess Who:** A two-player game. Each child has a matching selection of Categories stones. They each choose a stone as their secret cat but doesn't tell their opponent. They take it in turns to ask questions that will eliminate some of the stones from each other's selection and to help them to find out their opponent's secret cat.
- **Draw and Describe:** One child takes a Categories stone from a bag without showing their partner. They then describe the cat to their partner who tries to draw what is being described.



Other activity ideas

- Make cat homes out of construction materials. Explore the skills of conversation by discussing their similarities and differences.
- Do the same for collars for the cats.
- Name the cats, discussing options and making decisions.
- Make name plates for the homes, focusing on the fine motor skills involved.
- Untangle balls of wool or string that the cheeky cats have got in a mess.
- Provide other sorting sets to explore: cotton reels, play bricks, small world animal sets.
- How can these sets be sorted?



Extending the learning

- Challenge the children to work in small groups to create some attribute sets for other animals, domestic or wild. Encourage them to give you focused attention so that they can learn to process several instructions.
- Ask the children to choose their own themes for their attribute set, which they can go on to gather resources for.



Children's books featuring cats

- *Is That my Cat?* by Jonathan Allen
- *Slinky Malinki* by Lynley Dodd
- *Tabby McTat* by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler
- *The Further Adventures of the Owl and the Pussycat* by Julia Donaldson and Charlotte Voake
- *Matilda's Cat* by Emily Gravett
- *Six Dinner Sid* by Inga Moore