

Stones are a wonderful natural resource that children find hugely appealing. Children will find many ways to play with the Natural Sorting Stones, as they enjoy their smooth feel and the satisfaction of stacking them. As a truly open-ended resource, they allow children to make their own discoveries about colour, weight and balance.

Each to his stone!

The stones are so tactile, they're ideal for putting in a feely bag:

- Can the children guess what might be in the bag?
- What do they feel like?
- What words could they use to describe them?
- Can they find three stones that are the same size?
- Can they find three differently sized stones?



Give the children opportunities to explore the stones independently.

- They might start stacking them straight away, or maybe the stones will be interpreted as characters (such as 'daddy', 'sister' and 'baby').
- Listen out for mathematical language that you can build on, such as heavier, bigger or tallest (stack!).
- As they enjoy stacking the stones, children will be developing their sense of balancing objects and their fine motor skills.

Children could be encouraged to sort the stones:

- into groups by colour
- into groups by size
- into groups by weight
- in order from smallest to largest
- in order from lightest to heaviest.



You could also use the stones as props for demonstrating simple adding and taking away. If you have a traditional set of weighing scales, you could see what combination of stones will balance the scales and talk about which weigh more or less.

Let's play!

The stones can form part of an open-ended collection of resources for the children to play with indoors and outside, going wherever their imagination takes them. This could be in a sand tray, as children enjoy burying and uncovering the stones, or maybe in a treasure basket alongside other objects with interesting textures, such as pine cones, sponges, seashells, fabrics, feathers and wooden items.



The stones can also help to create a landscape for any number of small world play invitations:

- in the water tray, around the edge of a pond for a frog family
- a rocky terrain for mountain-dwelling animals like goats, bears and snow leopards
- in a rock pool, with shells, crabs and fish
- on a sandy construction site with plenty of heavy machinery
- on the moon or a distant planet, with rockets, astronauts and aliens!
- surrounded by moss and offering shelter for creepy crawlies to hide under
- the land of the dinosaurs
- on the seabed, with all sorts of sea creatures, seaweed and even a shipwreck!
- stepping stones across a river made from blue fabric, and some play characters to cross the river.



Get talking – useful words

smooth, round, flat, sort, groups, order, bigger/biggest, smaller/smallest, heavier/heaviest, lighter/lightest, taller/tallest, shorter/shortest