

These spherical rollers are easy and satisfying to use, and ideal for exploring a variety of patterns and textures found in the animal world. They feature patterns from wild animals that fascinate many young children: giraffe (spots), zebra (wider stripes), tiger (narrower stripes), elephant (skin) and leopard (rosettes). The stamper also allows them to match the patterns to the animal shapes. As children roll animal patterns in dough, they will be developing important coordination and fine motor skills.



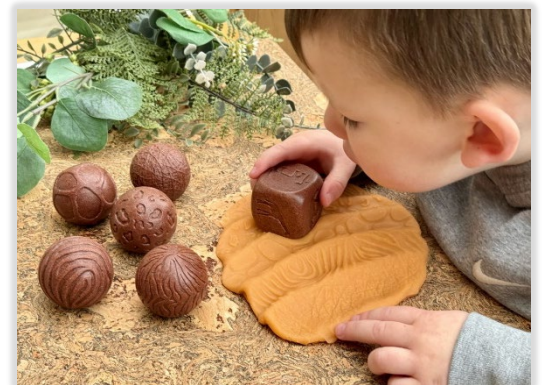
Start the ball rolling



As well as allowing children to explore using the rollers independently, you can extend their learning in various ways:

- Admire the pattern that the child makes in the play dough and ask them what they can see. What words could they use to describe the pattern? Does it show fur or skin?
- Children might choose to roll round and round, up and down, or in any direction – use directional language as you talk about their movements.
- Younger children may simply enjoy using the roller as a stamp – or stamping with the animal stamper.
- Encourage them to press harder or more gently and see how this changes the appearance of the pattern.

- Talk about how the play dough feels as they squish it under the roller. Is it smooth or rough, hard or soft?
- The patterns in the dough are inviting to touch – what do they feel like?
- Encourage children to create a pattern and find which animal it belongs to on the stamper. Alternatively, they could roll the stamper like a die, then find the roller that will make the corresponding pattern. You could also match the rolled patterns and the stamped animal shapes to wild animal figures.
- Offer play dough in several colours for children to explore mixing and rolling together.
- Use the rollers with a variety of substrates, each with a different feel to it – such as kinetic sand, cloud dough, clay or a thick slime.



Animal adventures

- Offer some fabric showing animal patterns for the children to feel. You could also match the rolled patterns to animal patterns in a book.
- Talk about camouflage in wild animals. Why does an animal that is hunted by other animals need to disguise itself? Why does a predator need to stay hidden? Think about how different animal patterns help animals to be camouflaged in different habitats.

- Use the rollers and dough on a safari-themed discovery table, alongside animal figures, pictures and books. You could also include Let's Investigate Safari Footprints or Endangered Animal Families Wooden Characters.
- Find out more about wild animals together, using books, videos or even a visit to a safari park or zoo. Do the children have a favourite wild animal? Can you find out more about the places where these animals live in the wild? Talk about how some of these animals are endangered and what people are doing to protect them and their habitats.
- Create pictures or other artwork using paper or fabric showing animal patterns. (If none is available, you could do an online search for 'zebra pattern to print' or similar, then print them off for children to cut shapes from.) These could be animal pictures, or simply based on the patterns the children have made with the rollers.

On safari

As children create different patterns with the rollers, talk about real wild animals:

Giraffe

- What does a giraffe look like? What are giraffes famous for?
- Which colours is a giraffe? What pattern does it have? How does its pattern help it to be camouflaged?
- What do giraffes eat? What else do they need? Where do they live?
- How is a giraffe's long neck useful?



Zebra

- What does a zebra look like?
- Which colours is a zebra? What pattern does it have? When a herd of zebras is running together, how might their stripes be confusing for a predator?
- What do zebras eat? What else do they need? Where do they live?
- What animals might eat zebras?

Leopard

- What does a leopard look like?
- Which colours is a leopard? What pattern does it have? When a leopard is stalking through the long grass, how might its pattern help it to hide?
- What do leopards eat? What else do they need? Where do they live?

Tiger

- What does a tiger look like?
- Which colours is a tiger? What pattern does it have? When a tiger is creeping through the jungle, how might its stripes help it to hide?
- What do tigers eat? What else do they need? Where do they live?

Elephant

- What does an elephant look like? How big is it? What are elephants famous for?
- What colour is an elephant? What is its skin like?
- What do elephants eat? What else do they need? Where do they live?
- What is the difference between African and Indian elephants?

Get talking – useful words

Fur, skin, soft, rough, camouflage, prey, predator, endangered, calf (giraffe/elephant), foal (zebra), cub (tiger/leopard).

Rolling action: roll, push, stamp, away, towards, across, round, roll gently, press harder

Books about wild animals

- *Handa's Surprise* by Eileen Browne
- *Rumble in the Jungle* by Giles Andreae
- *Way Far Away on a Wild Safari* by Jan Peck
- *Animal Families: Safari* by Janes Ormes