

The attractive colours and shapes of these flower stones and bowls will invite children to sort, match and play. They provide natural opportunities for early maths, as children count, subitise and make repeating patterns. The bowls are also ideal for sand and water play, inviting children to investigate capacity and buoyancy through filling them up or floating them on water.

Petals, patterns and play

The combination of colours and shapes among the flowers and bowls makes them ideal for children to explore mathematical concepts through play:

- As children investigate the flowers and bowls for themselves, they will be drawn to sorting them by colour and matching the flowers to the corresponding bowl. Talk about what the different colours are and count how many flowers there are in each colour. Children might also enjoy finding other small items in the same colours to sort into the bowls.
- Children may also notice that some flowers have more petals than others. Encourage them to sort the flowers by shape, counting the petals to check they are in the correct group. You might like to match the flowers with the same number of petals to the corresponding numeral – such as a Number pebble or a number shape.
- Take the opportunity to ask questions and encourage children to count items for themselves. You might like to position the flowers in a variety of arrangements for children to count (such as in a line, a square or an irregular arrangement).



- Encourage children to subitise – for example, can the children tell without counting how many blue flowers there are, or how many petals a particular flower has?
- Take the opportunity to compare different groups of flowers – or flowers with different numbers of petals. Talk about which have more or less flowers or petals – and which have one more or one less.
- With a group of flowers on a surface, take one and hide it in a bowl – how many flowers are left? Combine two groups – how many are there altogether?
- Use the flowers to begin a repeating pattern on a flat surface and ask children which flower comes next. Start with a simple ABAB pattern (such as green-blue-green-blue), then offer a more difficult ABBABB or ABCABC pattern (such as yellow-red-red-yellow-red-red or blue-red-green-blue-red-green).
- Offer thin twigs, skewers or thick twine for children to thread the flowers on. As well as practising fine motor skills, children may like to create their own patterns as they thread the flowers.

Bowl me over

The flowers and bowls can also feature in a variety of open-ended play opportunities:

- Offer the bowls in sand or water to encourage children to explore capacity and buoyancy, as they fill, pour out and float the bowls. Talk about how full or empty a bowl is, and whether it floats or sinks.
- You might like to hide the flowers in the bottom of a water tray, maybe under pebbles or sand. When the children have found them, they might enjoy putting them in the bowls as they float on the surface of the water.



- The bowls could also be used as boats for people or animal figures.
 - You could offer the bowls in a mud kitchen – perhaps as colourful crockery or for filling with a range of ingredients.
 - Challenge children to search inside and outdoors for small items that are the same colour as the bowl, and collect them inside it.
 - Combine the bowls and flowers with other flower-themed resources, such as real or artificial flowers, twigs, leaves, bees, butterflies and other insects.
 - In a small-world invitation, the bowls might make ideal homes for fairies or woodland creatures (perhaps on their sides or upside down at an angle). The flowers could be part of the environment or used as props (such as plates or hats!).
- Children might like to draw around the flowers to create their own flower art. They could add other natural or cut-out elements, such as real grass and leaves. You could also offer them alongside playdough for children to create simple floral designs.

Books about colours and sorting

Colours, Colours Everywhere by Julia Donaldson

10 Cats by Emily Gravett

Colors by John J. Reiss

Different? Same! by Heather Tekavec

Get talking – useful words

Bowls, flowers, petals, how many, count, more than, less than, one more, one less, sort, same, different.

