



101

ATOMS
EDUCATION

MESSY PLAY IDEAS

with



ACTIVITY

AT THE ZOO

You will need:

- A tray
- Zoo animals
- Cereal
- Loose parts e.g. curtain loops, bamboo, pine cones etc

Set up:

Pour the cereal into the tray to create sections or fields for the animals.

Place the animals in the fields.

Activity Ideas

You can make up stories about the animals in the zoo. What adventures might they go on?

Using the loose parts, you could make enclosures for the animals or make the zoo cosy for them.

Allow your child to develop their ideas through using the objects for different purposes.

Experiment with sound - use the animals to crush the cereal. Which animal makes the loudest sound? Which cereal is most quiet?

Introduce the vocabulary for zoo animals and the noises they make. Introduce the names for the baby animals. You could even play a listening game where your child listens to a sound and then finds the correct animal. You can talk about texture of the cereal e.g. crunchy, crumbly, soft etc.

For older children, you could classify animals into carnivores, omnivores and herbivores or even different types of animals e.g. birds, mammals etc.

PREP TIME: 5-10 MINS

EARLY LEARNING

0-11 MONTHS

*This is the time that babies begin to explore. They will begin to touch and hold objects. Babies tend to put things in their mouths - this allows them to discover the taste and texture of objects. Using food is a safe way of allowing your baby to explore different textures as well as tastes. **Ensure the cereal and animals you use are safe for babies.***

12 - 24 MONTHS

Your baby may now enjoy sensory experiences through touch. They may move the food around with their hands - exploring what happens with the speed and force of their movements. They may create a lot of mess! This allows parts of the brain to form connections and develops memory and movement skills. Your child may also begin to try and feed themselves. They may grab the food and put it to their mouth. This supports self-care and early independence.

2-3 YEARS

Through squatting down to play with different objects at floor level your toddler will develop their core muscles. Core muscle strength is important for future writing skills and stamina. At this stage, your child will begin to associate words to objects and will begin to name some things. To support you child, you can introduce the names of animals through your interactions.

3-4 YEARS

At this age, your child may begin to experiment with pretend play. Your child may use the food or objects to represent something else e.g. I am making a feeder for the giraffe. This supports imagination - which in turn supports children's ability to problem solve and to be creative in their future writing.

Your child will begin to develop awareness of sounds and will begin to associate sounds to different objects. Learning to distinguish sounds from one another, for example, the sounds that animals make, will help your child to be able to tell speech sounds apart in the future. Getting your child to focus on animal sounds and sounds they can hear in the environment is an important pre-requisite of reading and writing.

4-5 YEARS

Your child may begin to use objects and materials to create a story in their imaginative play. They may be creative and independently invent scenarios based on their experiences or things they have seen. They may demonstrate that they have their own ideas and will represent them in different ways. At this stage, you could let your child be creative with different tools, utensils, objects and food within their role play. Your child's listening skills will be increasing and your child may be able to tell animal sounds apart. Start to focus on more subtle sounds e.g. which cereal is the animal stomping in? You can also talk about the texture of the cereal and introduce descriptive words (adjectives).

Your child may be curious about what the animals eat or which animals are most similar. As you play with the animals, you may give a little information about the animal type etc. This will support your child in their future science learning.