

Activity Ideas for Farmyard Tuff Tray Mat (AW2)



The Farmyard Tuff Tray Mat can be used to encourage children to share, take turns and work collaboratively. Children may start by playing with key adults before moving away to play on their own or with others.

Learning with the Tuff Tray Mat

- Children learn best when they are actively involved and enjoying what they are doing through physical and mental challenges. Small Worlds enable children to experience learning through a multi-sensory approach which can engage and involve children for sustained periods. They provide learning opportunities for a wide range of learning areas, where children can freely explore materials within the confines of the tuff spot.
- There will be elements of consolidation, exploration, investigation, and fun in every activity.
- Children can have independence and control over their learning which keeps their interest and develops their creativity. They can also become absorbed in finding out about the world through their explorations, investigations and questions by using a wide range of resources with the mat.
- Activities can be free play/child initiated, where the children explore independently or adult directed, where children are given specific tasks to undertake.

Activity Ideas

Investigating different materials

A farmyard is home to many different materials, so the mat is a good starting point for discussions about materials and their properties. Add items such as peat, sawdust, mud or artificial grass so the children can explore (risk assess accordingly). Why would these materials be found on the farm? What would they be used for?

Understanding the world

Have discussions about the world in which we live. The mat can be a great for prompting discussions about seasons, life cycles and growth.

The mat can be used to introduce children to different vocabulary such as farmyard, field, fence, barn, cattle grid, scarecrow and pond etc. Children can also learn about different animals and their young.

Being curious and asking questions

An ideal resource for encouraging questions:

Why do farms need gates and fences on some fields?

What is the scarecrow's job?

Why does the farmer plough the field?

Where will the crops go when they are harvested?

What do the animals eat?

What happens to the animals?

Construction and creating

Can the children make the mat 3D by constructing their own items to place on it?

Can they build walls, bridges, fences, using brick and blocks as well as 'junk' materials?

What else could they design and make?

E.g. a scarecrow, pretend crops from playdough or farm building from boxes.

Personal, Social and Emotional

As children play, encourage collaboration and discuss taking turns and sharing.

Discuss the importance of looking after animals. What do they need and how do we care for them?

Talk about the different roles on a farm and the importance of teamwork. Why is working together important?

Writing and mark making

Ideas include:

- Writing down feeding times for animals.
- Record keeping (which cows have been milked?)
- Give the milk tanker driver directions (or create a map) showing how to get to the farm.
- Re-telling traditional tales and rhymes.
- Writing stories about life on a farm.
- Making marks - tractor marks in the mud.

Stories and rhymes

Use the farmyard mat to encourage the children to create their own stories. What characters could they include? What adventures might take place on the farm?

Re-create traditional rhymes and stories e.g. Baa Baa Black Sheep, Little Boy Blue, Little Bo Peep, Old McDonald, The Enormous Turnip, Chicken Licken, Stone Soup, Billy Goats Gruff, What the Ladybird Heard and Gingerbread Man.

With younger children, discuss the different sounds that can be heard in a farmyard. Can they make the sounds to add to their stories and rhymes?

Past and present events

By learning about the past, present and future, children will also get the chance to explore similarities and differences.

Children can discover where the food we eat comes from e.g. crisps/potatoes, and that the milk we drink comes from a cow.

They can look at comparisons between old and new methods of farming (horse and plough/combine harvester) along with other uses of farmland e.g. move towards sustainability - solar fields and wind turbines.

A day in the life of a farmer – Compare past to present. Think about the future.

Problem-solving, reasoning and maths

Various opportunities include:

Weighing (filling bags of corn and feed)

Sorting (animals into fields and by type)

Counting (numbers of animals, legs, counting eggs into boxes)

Measuring (size of fields)

Comparing (sizes of animals/fields)

Using mathematical vocabulary (3 bags full)

Shape (finding shapes in the environment)

Position (where things are in relation to each other, behind, in front, on top of);

Estimation (how many cabbages in the field?)

Other suggested resources:

- Bricks/blocks
- Farm animals – male, female and their young
- Clip boards and writing implements
- Vehicles such as tractors, combine harvesters, ploughs, muck spreaders, horse box, 4x4, trailers, milk tankers
- Natural materials e.g. sand, gravel, stones, rocks, pebbles and straw.
- People – diverse range.
- Containers and vessels to use in farmyard play.
- Play dough
- Improvise by making your own resources from junk or everyday materials.

Care Instructions

- Use a damp cloth to wipe surface.
- We would recommend that you roll rather than fold your mat after use, with the picture facing outwards.
- Any wrinkles can also be removed by wafting a warm hairdryer over the mat.
- Store in a warm environment to avoid creases.

