

# Ideas and Inspiration for the TTS Wooden Toddler Sorting Pots

## *TTS Wooden Toddler Sorting Pots (EY06795)*

### **Wooden Toddler Sorting Pots – Supporting Learning in the Early Years**

The Wooden Toddler Sorting Pots are a versatile, open-ended resource that encourage children to explore, experiment, and make discoveries through hands-on play.

With different sized pots and matching lids, children are naturally drawn to filling, emptying, stacking, rolling and problem solving.

These simple wooden pots spark curiosity, support many areas of learning, and develop a range of skills in the early years. They also link to children's schematic interests and behaviours.

This download includes a range of ideas and inspiration to get you started with the Wooden Toddler Sorting Pots.



## Communication and Language

### Conversations Through Play

These pots are a natural conversation starter. Children often comment on what they have discovered, for example, whether a lid fits or not - 'Too big' or 'Mine fits!'

Adults can build on these moments by modelling short phrases, repeating children's words back, or asking open questions: 'What happens if we try that lid on a different pot?' 'What have you found in the pot?' 'It's too big.'

#### Example vocabulary to introduce:

- Big, small, empty, full, lid, pot, fit, round, inside.

#### Taking it further:

- Hide little objects inside the pots to spark curiosity and conversation as children take off the lid and investigate the contents. Peek in the pots (to create suspense and excitement) and describe what you can see so that the children become intrigued about what is hidden inside.

### Exploring Collections

Adding small collections of objects into the pots can spark new conversations and widen children's vocabulary.

For example, you could hide small poms poms that can be retrieved with fingers or tweezers in the smallest pot, shiny gems or buttons in another, or natural materials such as conkers in the larger one (risk assess contents used in line with age of children).

Encourage children to name, describe, and compare what they find as they lift the lids to discover what is inside.

#### Example vocabulary to introduce:

- Descriptive language linked to collections/object, names of objects, hidden, treasures, inside.

#### Taking it further:

- Include different objects so that the children are introduced to new vocabulary, textures and shapes.
- Can children look at the items in the pot and guess the name of the collection e.g. animals?

# Physical Play

## Busy Fingers

Removing and replacing the lids involves using fine motor skills such as using the pincer grip or a grasp to lift the lid. They can use other movements too such as lifting and pushing. Children can practise using different grips and movements in their play until they succeed.

They can also experiment with removing items from the pots in a variety of ways. For example, they may use tweezers, fingers or spoons to scoop or pick out the items. Some children may simply lift and tilt the pot to tip the contents out.

### Example vocabulary to introduce:

- Pinch, pick, scoop, lift, grab, grasp, push, tilt, tip.

### Taking it further:

- Give children access to a range of other containers in different areas of provision that contain different lids. Can they use their motor skills and work out how to remove the lid off each one? What movement do they need to use? Is it a twist lid, flip-top lid or push-pull lid?

## Stacking and Balancing

Children may enjoy stacking the pots into towers. Some may carefully order them by size, while others build wobbling structures just to watch them tumble or knock them down.

As children stack the pots, they are not only using their motor skills but also problem solving. For example, experimenting with the order of the pots – What will happen if I put the smaller pot on the bottom? Is it easier to stack them using the base or the open top of the pot? Will they stack with the lids on?

Other children will simply enjoy rolling the pots.

### Example vocabulary to introduce:

- Stack, balance, tall, short, wobble, fall, tower, structure, roll.

### Taking it further:

- Can the children find other pots to stack and balance? Can they combine them with the Wooden Sorting Pots to make a taller tower or a structure such as a rocket?

### Ordering by Size

The pots naturally lend themselves to ordering from biggest to smallest. They may line them up, stack them, or compare them side by side.

Children might naturally arrange them from smallest to largest, while others experiment by swapping their order until it 'looks right.'

Other children will practise ordering the pots by finding the correct space on the wooden base. They may do this visually or by trial and error.

#### Example vocabulary to introduce:

- Big, bigger, biggest, small, smaller, smallest, order, size, large, little, short, tall, fits, more, less.

#### Taking it further:

- Link to real life – 'Which pots would hold the most pom poms?'
- Can the children find items of similar sizes to line up besides the pots?
- Can they find items that are bigger, smaller or the same size as the pots?

### Sorting and Grouping Collections

Fill the pots with mixed objects and invite children to sort them – by colour, size, or type.

The sound of each item dropping in supports one to one correspondence, helping children understand that every number relates to one object when counting.

Can they find which collection contains the most/least number of items? Can they explain the reasons behind why they have sorted the objects the way they have?

#### Example vocabulary to introduce:

- Same, different, more. Less, bigger, smaller, colours, numbers.

#### Taking it further:

- Add the pots to different areas of provision so that the children can continue to practise their sorting and grouping. For example, the pots could be used as ingredient jars in the home corner or used to hold materials in the craft area.

# Creative Play

## Imagination and Story Telling

The pots lend themselves easily to pretend scenarios as they have no fixed rules or functions and are open-ended.

Children often decide what they are in the moment – cups for tea, beds for tiny creatures, plant pots, treasure boxes, cooking bowls, drums or food containers.

Imaginative play with the pots can shift depending on what's nearby. Add a spoon and they become part of a kitchen. Place them next to wooden figures and they might turn into houses or hiding places. With natural resources, they can quickly become mixing bowls, potion pots, or treasure tubs.

### Example vocabulary to introduce:

- Cup, drink, treasure, drum, food, pour, tap, bowl, pretend.

### Taking it further:

- Offer the pots as a story prompt. For example, 'Whose breakfast bowls are these?' Link to stories that relate to size such as 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' and 'Three Billy Goats Gruff.'

## Sound, Music and Rhythm

The pots make great sound makers, especially when they discover they can tap, bang, or shake them.

Some children will use their hands to drum on them, while others will turn them into shakers.

Adding different objects inside the pots (beads, rice, conkers – risk assess) can change the sound completely, which leads to lots of testing, comparing, and repeating.

Children might start creating their own patterns, copy a rhythm made by an adult, or use the pots as instruments in songs and nursery rhymes.

### Example vocabulary to introduce:

- Tap, bang, shake, loud, quiet, soft, noisy, fast, slow, rhythm, beat.

### Taking it further:

- Create 'sound pots' by filling each one with something different, inviting children to compare how they sound when shaken or tapped.
- Go on a sound hunt. Can the children fill each pot with items all beginning with the same sound?

## Schematic Play

The Wooden Toddler Sorting Pots are a great match for the play patterns that children return to again and again as they try to make sense of the world. Without any prompting, they naturally use the pots to explore schemas like filling, lining up, rolling, and carrying.

### **Containment**

Children might fill the pots with a range of items then tip them out and start over. Some will place one object in each pot and move them around in the space. Others may hide things in them and return later to check that they are still there.

### **Positioning**

Lining up or arranging the pots in rows or arcs can be a common theme in the positioning schema. Children may also position lids beside matching pots or place items carefully on top of or underneath the pots.

### **Rotation**

The round shape encourages rolling, spinning or twisting. Children might roll the pots across the floor or twist the lids round and round.

### **Transporting**

Children may gather pots and move them around. They may use the pots to transfer items from one place to another.

### **Trajectory**

Children could throw poms poms, balls of paper or other soft items into the pots. This could be made into a game with each pot having a number of points attached to it.