

Sorting and matching

Being able to sort and match are important early maths skills – they are ways of organising things and focusing on similar and different features, e.g. colour, type, shape, size etc.



When children explore sorting and matching in everyday life or as part of their play, they are building the foundations for more advanced mathematical and scientific thinking later on.

Opportunities for sorting and matching

Sorting and matching is something that we do without even thinking about it – often to make life easier! For example – sorting dirty washing into piles of similar colours, then matching up clean socks and sorting clothes into piles ready to be put away.

Involving your child in sorting and matching activities will help them to look carefully, to compare and take notice of things that are the same and things that are different.

You can look for things to sort and match anywhere – at home and when out and about. Here are some sorting and matching ideas to explore with your child:

Out and about

- noticing different and similar vehicles – *same colours, different sizes or types*



- picking up and sorting and matching conkers, acorns, leaves, twigs etc.
- talking about the colour of your front door, and other front doors in your road
- packing shopping into different bags – frozen food, cans and packets, fresh fruit and vegetables...

Playing with toys

- playing with cars – *noticing that the police car is different from the taxi, but that they are both cars*



- dressing dolls – *two red socks*
- finding the right size and colour blocks when they are building
- sorting out the edge pieces of a jigsaw puzzle

Everyday routines

- unpacking the shopping – *which packet, jar or tin goes in which cupboard or shelf*
- tidying up toys – *putting things away in the right boxes*
- choosing bath toys and books
- finding matching pyjama tops and bottoms at bed time

Ways of sorting and matching

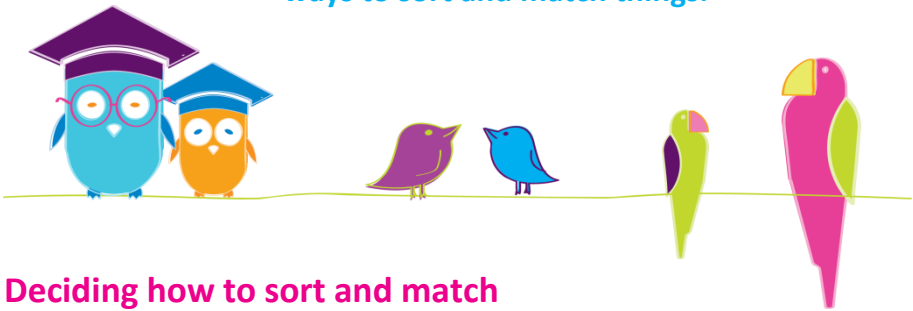


There are lots of different ways to sort and match things – perhaps by size, colour, shape, type etc. Children learn that there are groups of things, and also groups *within* groups. For example:

- cutlery can be sorted into knives, forks and spoons, and spoons can be sorted into teaspoons and tablespoons

- animals can include fish, birds, mammals, reptiles, insects... or perhaps farm animals, zoo animals, pets, dinosaurs etc.
- birds can be big or small, different colours and different types – pigeons, blackbirds and robins.

There are lots of different and interesting ways to sort and match things.



Deciding how to sort and match

There are lots of different ways to separate, sort, organise and group things – perhaps by size, colour, shape or simply by like and dislike!

It is likely that if you give your child a selection of items to sort and match, they will arrange them into groups that are different to the ones you might have chosen!

Your child will separate, sort and make their own groups and collections of items in a way that is interesting and meaningful for them. You can help by recognising and talking with them about the different kinds of groups they have chosen. This will help your child to learn the words that describe their decisions and actions.

There can be different rules for sorting and matching



Benefits of sorting and matching

Encouraging your child to explore sorting and matching as part of playful and practical activities will help them to learn:

- about things that are the same, things that are similar, and things that are different
- different ways of sorting things, i.e. using different features such as colour, types or size
- that the same things can be sorted in different ways at different times – e.g. clothes can be sorted into sizes, colours or perhaps whether they are summer or winter clothes
- that it is useful to be able to sort and match objects so that we can find certain items from groups of things – for example, finding the red socks in the sock drawer

Sorting and matching encourages children to be curious and investigate their world.

