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Place Mat Sit-Upons



Transition Strategy

Children will settle into group time readily if they have a special seating space waiting for them. A nice variation of the traditional carpet square is the vinyl place mat, which can be found in a large variety of shapes and bright colors. You can further identify individual place mats by printing the child's name or attaching the child's picture. Children who are distractible will find an individualized destination in the group area helps them focus on where they need to be.

Variation

Make your own vinyl placemats by cutting an oval shape out of vinyl fabric (12 by 8 inches), one for each child. Using a child's photo or a page from a large, shaped notepad, such as a gingerbread boy or frog, write the child's name on the notepad paper, lay it or the photo on the mat, and cover the area with clear Con-Tact paper.

Materials

Vinyl place mat for each child

Permanent marker

Optional: Photos of children

Clear plastic mailing tape (3 inches wide)

Directions

1. Print each child's name on a vinyl place mat.
2. If you use photos, lay them on place mats and cover with clear mailing tape or clear Con-Tact paper.
3. To reuse, remove names with hair spray. Remove pictures.

A Tub of Snakes

Transition Strategy

A tub or a box of colorful, furry snakes will surely attract children to group time! Use these stuffed snakes to bring children's attention to your next activity. Perhaps you'll read *Hide and Snake* by Keith Baker, or listen to a song about a snake, or pretend to be snakes slithering over the ground. Create a little suspense as you describe what could be in the box you've brought today. Make enough snakes so each child has one to hold during the activity. If any children are afraid of snakes, don't force them to participate until they are ready.

Variations

- ★ **Settler:** If the snakes create unwanted behaviors (such as teasing or scaring others), introduce them as friendly snakes and offer them as a settler. The soft, furry fabric has a soothing effect on children. Let them hold the snakes while you introduce your activity or while you read your book.
- ★ **Magic Carpet Activity:** A tub of snakes will make a good Magic Carpet activity. Children can play individually or with a buddy. They can count and sort by color or design.

Materials

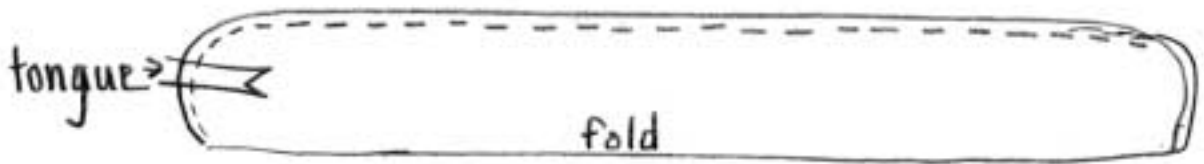
Fake fur or polar-fleece fabric in bright colors (½ yard of 64-inch-wide fabric)
1 square red felt
Fabric paint—white and black
Fiberfill
Dowel or other stuffing tool

Directions

1. Make a slithery snake pattern from poster board 4 by 12 inches, keeping the snake about 3 inches wide.
2. Using a ballpoint pen, trace your pattern, side by side, across the width of the fabric. (You should get approximately 16 snakes.) Cut one tongue shape for each snake from the red felt.



3. Cut out shapes, fold each in half lengthwise with right sides together, and insert a “tongue” between the layers at one end. The part of the tongue that will show should be inside the snake at this point.
4. Sew the length of the fabric and across the tongue end, leaving the other end open. Turn right side out. The tongue should be sticking out of the end you sewed across.
5. Using a dowel, tightly stuff polyester fiberfill into the snake.
6. Sew the open end shut.
7. Draw on eyes by using white fabric paint; let dry. Make a black triangle at the center of each eye with the black paint.



Shimmering Cloth

Special Needs

Toddler

Transition Strategy

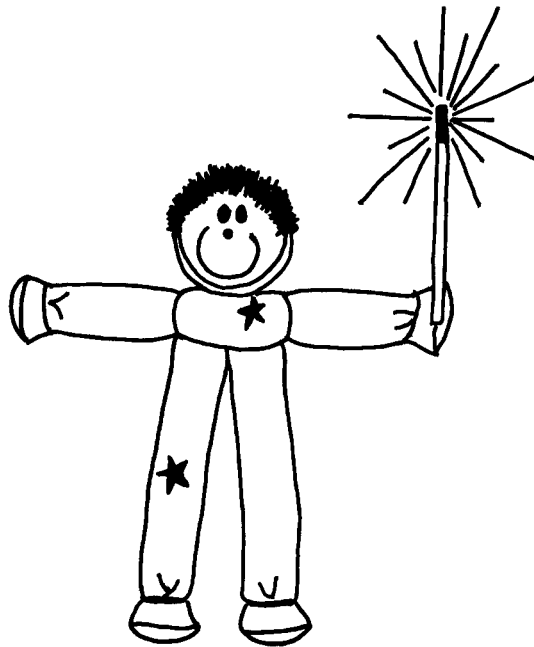
Create suspense and the element of mystery by covering an object with a shimmering sequined cloth. Young children and children with visual impairments will especially be attracted by the glittery fabric. Choose objects that will pique the interest of all the children, perhaps something with an unusual shape. Toddlers, who love hide-and-seek games, will love to find out what is under the shimmering cloth and will want you to hide it again and again.

Variation

- ★ Use glittery fabric to sew a bag the size of a pillowcase. A drawstring is optional. Use the bag with toddlers, to hide objects. See if they can find the objects. They will love taking out the objects and putting them back in. Choose familiar items from the classroom to use in your bag.

Materials

1 yard of sequined fabric (more for larger objects)



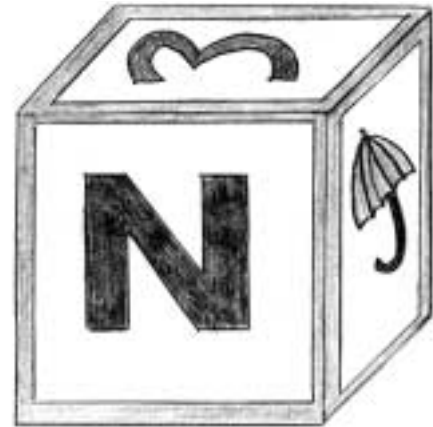
Stickie Cube

Transition Strategy

Focus children's attention with a Stickie Cube as they settle in for your next activity. This box is covered with Con-Tact paper. Plastic-cling shapes, letters, or numbers magically stick to the outside of this box and will spark conversations with children. For older preschoolers, use alphabet letters to indicate the first letter of a child's name. "I see Nathan is sitting flat. What letter does your name start with? 'N,' that's right. I'm going to put an 'N' on the cube." Repeat. For toddlers, use simple plastic-cling objects such as a telephone, toothbrush, or umbrella, and talk about what we do with those objects. When children are settled and focused, you can flow in to your next activity.

Variations

- ★ Instead of using plastic clings, use a write-and-wipe marker to draw pictures or print letters.
- ★ **Extender:** Make this an interactive activity by having the children tell you a story as you put plastic-cling figures on the sides of the box. Use animals, fruits, or shapes as story visuals.



Materials

- 1 cube-shaped box
- Write-and-wipe Con-Tact paper or static-cling sheets (purchased at office supply stores), or glossy page protectors
- Scissors
- Colored electrician's tape
- Plastic window-cling shapes and letters (purchased from teacher supply catalogs or in discount or drug stores)
- Optional: Write-and-wipe marker

Directions

1. Fill box with crumpled newspaper or fiberfill to keep it from caving in.
2. Cover the entire outside of the box with the write-and-wipe Con-Tact paper or static cling sheets.
3. Reinforce the corners with electrician's tape. See illustration.
4. Cover sides with plastic window-cling shapes or letters.