

# Outdoor resource box... washing day

How to resource for this outdoor role-play activity.  
By *Lyndsey Gardner*

## THEME

We decided to create a 'washing day' outdoor resource box after noticing that a number of children kept on taking home-area role-play resources outdoors. One child in particular was observed attempting to repeatedly peg doll's clothes onto a washing line made from string and fabric, and so a washing day outdoor resource box was a natural next step for staff to develop for children to link their indoor play with the outdoors.

## CHOICE

So that children could play imaginatively and independently, we provided them with a varied assortment of resources including aprons, pegs, washing lines, string, rope, fabric and a selection of clothing in different shapes, sizes and colours (see box). The addition of socks in various sizes, colours and patterns enabled the children to explore categorisation.

Staff and children's parents and carers donated empty washing powder boxes, as well as washing-up-liquid bottles and rubber gloves to supplement the resources and play.

We then added a cash register to the outdoor resource box and were surprised at how quickly the children started to 'charge' for their washing and ironing 'services'! Mark-making resources to enable children to create



price lists equipped them with opportunities to explore number and other early mathematical concepts.

## AVAILABILITY

The outdoor resource box was initially introduced to children in small groups – often during key worker times. This enabled staff to observe children's play closely in order to consider what other new resources could be introduced.

Children were keen to share their own ideas about what could be added to the box and how they could use some of the resources. As the ideas from both staff and children developed, additional and individual activity bags were created to extend and enrich children's learning further.

## OBSERVATIONS

As the contents of the box developed, it was observed that all the children demonstrated a keen interest in engaging with the resources. Although some children found using a peg to attach clothes to a washing line quite a challenge, their 'have a go' approach and determination, coupled with staff modelling, enabled them to succeed.

While some children enjoyed using the string, rope and fabric to tie knots to attach the washing line to different locations, others demonstrated more of an interest in the role-play and imaginative experiences.

## INDOORS

Indoor continuous provision and key worker times provided all the children with plentiful opportunities to discuss,

debate and develop ideas to extend their own learning. Much of the learning indoors was observed to have a mathematical focus. Children explored pattern, sequencing, number, shape and size through first-hand experiences.

## LEARNING

The most significant aspect of learning to emerge from using these resources has been mathematical. The children have:

- been able to engage in real-life problem-solving, involving mathematical thinking
- extended their knowledge of space, shape, number and measure
- been challenged when considering how groups of items could be categorised according to their different properties.

Additionally, the children have had the opportunity to develop their fine motor skills through using such resources as pegs, string, rope and fabric, as well as to discuss and debate, which has promoted their communication and language. ■

*Lyndsey Gardner is a senior early childhood educator and room leader at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre in Liverpool, [www.evertonnurseryschoolandfamilycentre.org](http://www.evertonnurseryschoolandfamilycentre.org)*

**The children showed a 'have a go' approach and determination when using the washing day resources**

## ON THE LIST

- String, rope, fabric and washing lines
- Pegs and other items that 'attach'
- Empty washing powder boxes and washing-up-liquid bottles
- An assortment of clothing in different shapes, sizes and colours
- Rubber gloves
- Fiction/non-fiction texts
- Paper, pencils, Post-it Notes, clipboards and notepads
- Signs and signage
- Cash register
- Information cards
- Laminated numbers
- Wooden blocks