Spin off

Ideas and resources for supporting children's interest in rotation. By ***Nicole Weinstein***

Children with an interest in rotation are preoccupied with roundness. Rolling down slopes; spinning their bodies; whizzing around in circles on scooters; stirring up concoctions in the mud kitchen and using locks, keys and screwdrivers.

Infants will enjoy exploring rotation with their senses, such as rolling a wooden ball or the wheels of a toy vehicle across their cheek. They might also lie down with their head next to the vehicle and turn the wheels, watching intently as the wheels spin around.

'As they reach pre-school age, children will start to combine schemes enabling more sophisticated play such as creating construction and engaging role-play activities,' explains Lynnette Brock, director of SchemaPlay.

Early years educators on the look-out for new repeated actions can 'seed' resources in continuous provision so that children can develop their schemes in a range of contexts, opening up a breadth of curriculum experiences and learning opportunities.

SEEDING THE ENVIRONMENT

Children will be keen to learn how rotation works in different contexts once they have explored what 'roundness' feels like. For instance, in the mark-making area they may use their hands and fingers to draw spirals and circles and make whole-body actions and repetitive actions with objects. These actions are pre-requisites for early writing skills and support wrist flexibility, anti-clockwise movement and lightness of touch.

Lynnette stresses, 'But if a child hasn't had enough movement or experience using one-handed tools – paint rollers, paint brushes and chalks outside – they cannot be expected to write the letters "o", "a" or "e", which are all an anti-clockwise rotational movement.'

Young children will also verbalise their exploratory actions, by saying words such as "round", "rolling", "spinning", "circle" while exploring a rotating scheme.

Early years educators can support and extend children's language development by introducing stories and rhymes anchored in their rotational scheme. For example, the 'Wheels on the Bus' and other books with rotating parts or round objects in the storylines, such as 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'.

Lynnette says, 'Adding props to these literacy experiences that are anchored in their schemes, for example, three round bowls for Goldilocks, can often be a great way into discovering the joy of stories and books.'

Children with an interest in rotation will enjoy:

- playing with objects that spin, roll and turn
- twisting and turning their own bodies; rolling down hills; spinning around in circles
- looking at and interacting with round objects, such as balls or wooden disks
- riding bikes or scooters around in circles
- turning taps on and off
- mixing water, sand and mud or cooking activities with spoons and whisks
- drawing or tracing around circles or drawing spirals.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT ROTATION

- Baskets containing wooden, metal or fabric balls in a range of sizes, or wooden, fabric or metal bangles of different thicknesses. Infants will enjoy TTS's Wooden Stackable Rattles, £44.95, or its Sight and Sound Sensory Wooden Drum, £99.95. Natural Pebbles 12 Set, £24.99, are perfect for exploring rotation movement. Children can spin them round or stack them up.
- A sturdy container containing fruit and vegetables or balls that can be selected and rolled. Cosy's Multi-Sensory Ball Pack of 20, £28.79, is a good option.
- Different-sized balls offered with ramps can support perception of distance and height. Try Early Excellence's Marble Run, £165.
- One-handed tools that enable rotation: whisks and spoons can be used in cooking activities and for outdoor play. Try TTS's Giant Metal Whisks, £14.99, or Early Excellence's Set of Metal Water Tools, £29.95. Use them with the Set of Cauldrons, £18.95, from Early Excellence, to enhance imaginary play. Or encourage children to mix, mash and stir with Cosy's set of Petal Pots, £25.99, which are perfect for little hands.
- Hope's Hula Hoop Set – Assorted – 460mm – Pack of 12, £15.49, support gross motor physical development and exploration of distance and space as they are rolled across a garden. Or children might enjoy spinning themselves around in Hope's Whizzy Dizzy, £94.99.
- Rolling pins offered with playdough support the

Below: TTS's Giant Metal Whisks; EE's Investigating Air and Wind Selection; its Set of Wheels; and Hope's Whizzy Dizzy

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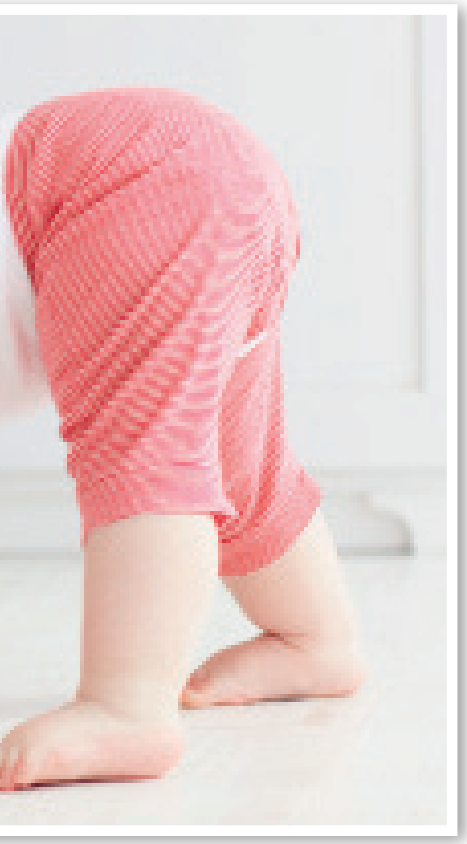
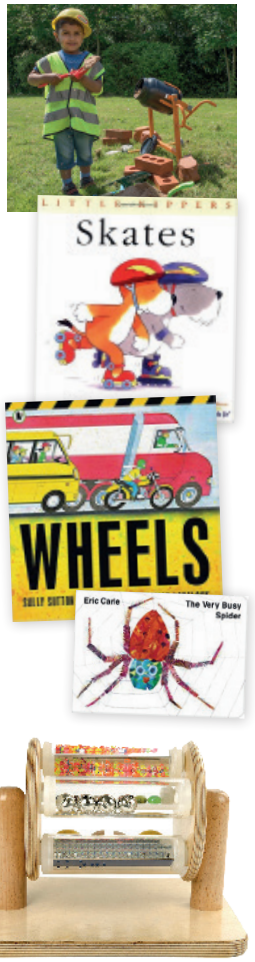


exploration of solid and flat shapes, as well as space and measure. Try Early Excellence's Set of Wooden Rolling Pins, £8.95.

- Cable reels, tyres, tree stumps, barrels and tunnels are great for exploring roundness, rolling and construction. Early Excellence's Set of Wheels, £44.95, and its Set of Steering Wheels, £42.95, can be combined to create transport vehicles. Cosy's Cable Drum Panacea, £249; the set of 12 Everlasting Rugged Rollers, £52.99; and Tyre Tastic (18pk), £103.99, can all be used for large-scale construction. Or children may prefer being rolled around inside the Gigantic Pipe, £215, also from Cosy.
- Spinning tops and resources that spin in the wind will help develop children's scientific knowledge. Try the Investigating Air and Wind Selection, £74.95, from Early Excellence, or TTS's Plastic Water Spinners, £28.95.
- The Outdoor Role Play Cement Mixer, £199.95, is the ultimate rotation resource for buildings in the making. It can be transported on wheels and children use their arm muscles to move the handle around and mix up the stones, sand and water.
- Provide small-world play with rotating applications, such as a toy garage with a rotating platform or a turntable in train track play.
- Salad spinners with paints might open up the child's interest in art. Also, try mark-making with brushes, twigs, chubby crayons and chalks. Add paint rollers to support the perception of distance.

Bottom: TTS's Sight and Sound Sensory Wooden Drum; and The Outdoor Role Play Cement Mixer



- Nuts, bolts, screwdrivers and turning keys in locks will be fascinating for some children. Hope's ten-piece Tool Belt, £14.99, will support workers on-the-go. And the chunky Alphabet Learning Locks, £49.99, also from Hope, will help with letter recognition.
- Share books such as *The Very Busy Spider* by Eric Carle, *Skates* by Mick Inkpen and *Wheels* by Sally Sutton and Brian Lovelock.

competition

TTS is offering Nursery World readers the chance to win a set of 'Wooden Sparkle Nesting Rings', worth £64.99. To enter the draw, scan the QR code and leave us your details. Good luck!

case study: Kings Hill Primary School in Walsall, West Midlands

Three year-old Archie (name changed) from Kings Hill Primary School in Walsall was fascinated with round objects, and objects that spin. His teacher, Louise Mayne, seeded the resources to enable him to apply the rotating scheme with his previously applied containing scheme.

She says, 'Archie immediately set to work enclosing a large rubber band around a wheel. He slid the wheel through a pole – containing – and tested it to check that the wheel could spin.

'Archie's play developed throughout the day and a narrative started to develop. More wheels were added to the construction; the spinning was tested – "It turns," he said and he began to engage in a new scheme, connecting, as he created a car from poles and wheels. He added "petrol" to the car – containing.'

By applying a combination of schemes, Archie's play was 'sustained and in-flow,' explains SchemaPlay's Lynnette Brock. She adds, 'His fascination with roundness, coupled with the application of the containing scheme, also supported Archie's engagement in connecting poles together and counting in a meaningful context, as he wanted to identify how many wheels he needed for his creation.'

When handling rotating parts, children not only gain an understanding of how things move and fit together but they also become aware of size and height: how big the wheels are; how small the hole is and how tall the car is. This helps them to develop spatial awareness.