

# LEARNING WITH...

## Pebbles

Welcome to the fascinating world of pebbles! These simple pebbles possess incredible power to engage, inspire and teach young children many skills. They can align to schematic interests and are perfect in support imaginative play along with many other areas of learning.



### Patterns and Sequences

Make and explore patterns and sequences. Copying, extending and creating patterns and sequences of their own equips children with early observational skills and understanding of mathematical patterns in the world around them. Can they make a repeating pattern that focuses on size? A big pebble, a small pebble etc. Alternatively, they may want to create a pattern linked to colour or type of pebble.

### Sorting and Counting

Children may enjoy sorting the pebbles into size, type, and colour sets. Can they identify the different ways in which they can be sorted? Can the pebbles be sorted in order of size (e.g., from smallest to biggest) or by type (e.g., mirrored, iridescent, wooden, natural)? Extend the children's knowledge by encouraging them to think beyond the obvious.

### Constructing and Balancing

Balance the pebbles to build towers and other structures. How high can the children stack the pebbles? Can the children count them to find out? They can mix and match the various pebbles and finishes to see which works the best. Will the slippery, metallic finishes work better than the irregular wooden pebbles? Wonder alongside the children – I wonder what will happen if we start with the smallest pebbles? Conversations will start to flow and problem-solving and curiosity will naturally be invited into the play.

### Loose Parts Play

Pebbles are a perfect addition to loose-parts play. The pebbles could be part of a transient art activity. Children may construct their artistic creations in various locations, experimenting with different canvases, e.g., on the ground, mirrored surfaces, tables, trays, or frames. Some children may enjoy using the different pebbles, e.g., glow, mirrored, or iridescent on a light panel.



### Imaginative and Symbolic Play

The beauty of using pebbles in play is that they have no predefined purpose so can become whatever the heart desires. The adventures are never-ending, from magical money found in a giant's castle to a pebble phone used to communicate with a friend. To add excitement, why not hide the pebbles for children to discover? What will they become? An enchanted egg, precious treasure, pasta being stirred in a pan, or a time-traveling device?

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### Treasure Baskets and Heuristic Play

Use the various pebbles to create interesting and engaging treasure baskets, encouraging heuristic play. Give children time to explore the different types of pebbles, form their own ideas, and experiment with combining them in different ways. Why not try placing them in different baskets and containers for added interest?

### Interaction and Communication

Give children time to explore the pebbles. What do they notice? Are they all the same? If not, what is different? As children observe, they will notice the different sizes, textures, and weights. Encourage them to describe what they can see and feel. Some may have natural patterns in the wood or patterns etched into the surface. Encourage a range of language and vocabulary such as shiny, patterned, iridescent and reflective, etc.

### Schematic Interests

Pebbles lend themselves perfectly to schematic behaviours. Younger children may enjoy transporting the pebbles to different places, carrying them around in various pots, bags, or containers. Others may be fascinated as they manipulate them, making them roll, spin, twist, and turn.

### Sensory Exploration

Create a magical sensory experience by adding different types of pebbles to a sensory den or light panel where children can explore light and colour to stimulate their senses. Pebbles move in many ways and can be mesmerizing to observe. The rhythm and motion can calm and relieve anxiety as they roll, wobble, and spin.

