

Active World Fairy Tale Mat



Product Code AW6

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Introduction Active World mats are an ideal tool to help practitioners deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage, as they embrace elements of all four EYFS themes. Using the mats encourages children's individual confidence and capabilities as they engage in using the mats in different ways. The mats encourage children to share, take turns, to work collaboratively, to engage with key adults initially, but then to move off independently to develop their own learning. The range of mats, play a key role in extending children's development and learning. The mats can be used to cover all areas of learning and development, and show clearly how they are all equally important and inter-related.

The mats can be used with all ages of children, from birth upwards, depending on the resources and adult intervention used with them.

These notes are written mainly for children in Foundation Stage settings, but the principles are easily adaptable for younger children.

Aims & Objectives

- Children learn best when they are actively involved, enjoying what they are doing, through physical and mental challenges. Active Worlds enable children to experience learning through a multi-sensory approach which can engage and involve children for sustained periods. They provide learning opportunities for a wide range of curriculum areas, where children can freely explore materials within the confines of the tuff spot.
- There will be elements of consolidation, exploration, investigation, and fun in every activity.

- Children can have independence and control over their learning which keeps their interest and develops their creativity. They can also become absorbed in finding out about the world through their explorations, investigations and questions through using a wide range of resources with the mats.
- All the activities can be free play, child initiated, where the children explore independently, or adult directed, where children are given specific tasks to undertake.

Links with Learning and Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage:

- Links can be made with every area of Learning and Development within the Early Years Foundation Stage. We have merely highlighted those links with the area Knowledge and Understanding of the World. Others are included generally in the next section.

Communication, Language and literacy: Below is a list of some of the stories that the mat could be used for (this is just a start!):-

3 Little Pigs; Red Riding Hood; Sleeping Beauty; Cinderella; Goldilocks; The Ugly Duckling; Rapunzel; Snow White; Puss-in-Boots; 3 Billy Goats Gruff; Hansel and Gretel; The Gingerbread Man; Rumpelstiltskin; Beauty and the Beast; The Jolly Postman as he visits all the houses on his route;

- **Interact with others, negotiating plans and activities and taking turns in conversation:**
Children can re-enact familiar stories using 3D materials e.g. Build the houses of the 3 Little Pigs and tell the story as they are doing it.
- **Listen to favourite stories...**
The children can then re-enact them using key words and phrases. This brings the stories to life in a multi-sensory manner. It gives the story meaning and context. This mat lends itself to exploring literacy in an experiential way – e.g, The 3 Billy Goats Gruff can literally ‘trip trap’ over the rickety bridge.
- **Describe main story settings, events and principal characters:**
Using the mats reinforces empathy with the characters in the story. The children are then more in a position to be able to talk about how characters think and feel. It also gives opportunity for children to have conversations with each other.
- **Enjoy listening to and using spoken and written language, and readily turn to it in their play and learning:**
Familiarity with the stories provides models of language that the children can then use when creating their own narratives.
- **Extend their vocabulary, exploring the meanings and sounds of new words:**
The richness of the vocabulary found in the stories can then be used in their play – e.g. ‘Rapunzel, let down your golden hair’; they entered the enchanted forest; the wicked witch cast a spell; the sparkling glass slipper; the rosy red apple. It will encourage the children to use more interesting descriptors in their writing and speech.

- **Speak clearly and audibly with confidence and control and show awareness of the listener:**
The children can practice and rehearse speaking out loud in an informal manner. It gives an excellent introduction to the children formulating and clarifying their ideas before presenting them in a more formal manner.
- **Use talk to give new meaning to objects and actions, treating them as symbols for other things:**
Children have the opportunity to let their imagination soar as they re-tell the tales. A margarine tub can be the pond, a few twigs can be one of the pigs' houses; shredded wheat can be the 'straw' for Rumpelstiltskin to weave with.
- **Use language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences. Use talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events:**
- **Re-tell narratives in the correct sequence, drawing on language patterns of stories. Show an understanding of the elements of stories.**
e.g. Red Riding Hood's surprise as she encounters the Big Bad Wolf. The children can put the story into the correct order of events. Children are aware of 'Once upon a time' and 'they all lived happily ever after'. The mats give a visible and practical way of children discussing and re-enacting different versions of the same story. They can see what would happen if Red Riding Hood had not told the wolf where she was going. The children become familiar with the repetitive language which helps them to understand the structure of the story – e.g. 'I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down'.

Ideas for use and links with other areas for Learning and Development:

Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy: Use of prepositions (through the forest, in the castle, over the bridge, along the road; behind the house, under the bridge etc) counting (how many goats; how many towers; how many houses; how many swans etc) shapes (can you find any spheres, cones, rectangles, triangles, circles etc); ordering of size (big, middle and small bears, goats); who can build the tallest tower for Rapunzel?

Personal, Social and Emotional Development: Is interested, excited and motivated to learn through this hands on experiential approach. Can work as part of a group taking turns, sharing, and collaborating. Fairy tales can be a way of introducing children to concepts of right and wrong – it was wrong of Goldilocks to eat the bears' food. In fairy tales, good triumphs over bad. Children can also begin to explore their emotions through the characters – sadness (a disappointed Cinderella when she can't go to the ball) joy (when she can!); fear (the 3 little pigs); jealousy (the wicked queen is jealous of Snow White's beauty); deception (the wolf pretending to be the grandma). This is an excellent vehicle to talk through a range of emotions with children in an objective, de-personalised situation. It could be used as the introduction to a circle time. The children could empathise with certain emotions in the lives of the characters they were re-creating – e.g. 'I was happy when...'

Creative Development: Respond in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch and feel. Exploring colour, texture, shape form and space. Use their imagination to create different role play stories. Exploring the use of different voices to re-create a variety of roles – e.g. the difference between the wolf speaking and the pigs. Re-creating specific stories (see list above!)

Physical Development: Uses a range of small and large equipment; handles tools, objects construction and malleable materials safely and with increasing control; develop fine motor control by manoeuvring the characters along certain routes and pathways, e.g. re-trace the

Billy Goats daily journey across the bridge. Show awareness of space of themselves and of others and they work closely together round the mat.

Knowledge and Understanding: Investigate objects and materials by using all their senses as appropriate – e.g. the Ugly Duckling is in a pond of real water; the little pigs houses are made of real straw, sticks and stones; the ‘trees’ are made out of twigs cut from bushes and hedges, placed in a piece of oasis or play dough. Build and construct with a wide range of objects, selecting appropriate resources and adapting their work as necessary – e.g. building the Gingerbread House for Hansel and Gretel; building the houses for the 3 little pigs; Geography: Use geographical vocabulary e.g. pond, river, bridge, path, mountain, trees, bushes, grass, fence, meadow, field, wood, forest. It also introduces children to an aerial view of a landscape.

Suggestions

Resources: (Here are some ideas of what could be used – this is just the beginning!)

Fairy Tale wooden figures

Fairy Tale castle Forest habitat trees

Oasis

Landscape matting

White glass stones Loose rock packs

Natural fibre and brown matting

Gravels

Improvisation - Make your own resources!

Dried peas and beans for pebbles

Foil for the river Shiny pebbles Leaves/foilage (either real or from fabric/paper)

Shredded wheat for straw

Margarine tub for pond

Dye spaghetti or rice with green food colouring and use that on the meadow

Tall towers from kitchen roll tubes

Castle from cardboard boxes

The meadow could be made from cress seed

Care instructions Use damp cloth to wipe surface.

We would recommend that you roll rather than fold your mat after use, with the picture facing outwards. Any wrinkles can also be removed by wafting a warm hairdryer over the mat.

To avoid creases store in a warm environment.