

This set of stones has raised textured details to provide tactile stimulation. This means the stones provide lots of sensory feedback to children when they handle them. By feeling, studying and discussing the natural objects depicted, children will develop their descriptive language skills. Designed for outdoor learning and investigative play, the stones are robust enough for use outside, including in water and sand, and can be easily washed clean. This set contains eight stones: auger shell, crab, jellyfish, lobster, nautilus shell, seaweed, starfish and whelk shell.



Key vocabulary

- Auger shell, crab, jellyfish, lobster, nautilus shell, seaweed, starfish and whelk shell
- Rockpool
- Seashore
- Sort
- Compare
- Similarities
- Differences
- Different from / Similar to
- Spiral, point, twist/turn, soft/hard, straight/curved, ridges, claw/pincer, sharp/blunt, hollow

Activity ideas

- Display the stones in nature baskets for the children to dip into for small world play.
- Make imprints of the stones in play dough. This works in the reverse too by pressing the dough onto the stone.
- Present the children with a range of play dough impressions arranged at different angles. Ask them to place the correct stone in the correct impression, moving the dough moulds as needed.
- Take rubbings of the stones using wax crayons
- Bury the stones in sand for the children to dig up
- Use the stones to create small world rockpools, providing resources for the children to choose from, helping them to explore the natural world, and ask questions as they play.
- Draw and colour a crab's claw, then cut it in half horizontally. Stick the upper half to the top of a peg below the hinge, and the lower half to the bottom in the same way. If you open the peg, the crab's claw should open too. Lots of opportunities to practise following instructions and seeking clarification. Make bigger versions using tongs or hinged salad servers.
- There are many examples of sand art on the Internet, including elaborate sandcastles, sculptures and geometric shapes marked in the sand using a rake. All these images will inspire children to become sand artists themselves given the space and resources.



- Hold a sandcastle making competition to promote cooperative learning. If you want to make the activity easier to manage, mix sand and play dough for a more stable building material. Try decorating the castles using the seashore stones and shells.
- Track-tastic: Leave a bucket of toy cars and other vehicles in the sand pit or near the sand tray. Encourage children to construct race tracks for the cars. The focus is on the race track rather than any racing. Lots of opportunities for gross and fine motor skills development as the children dig and sculpt their layouts. Take photographs so that the children can compare their builds and share them with others. Ask the children what worked best and why.

Extending the learning

- You can find spectacular examples of pebble art online: patterns drawn on stone using marker or gel pens. They look beautiful when put together as a large display. The seashore stones have different patterns and lines on them that the children might refer to as they work. This gives a good opportunity to include some of the descriptive language mentioned in the key vocabulary section.
- You can also find beautiful shell patterns online. Try looking up the shell grotto of Margate for inspiration. Making such patterns using shells consolidates children's sorting, patterning and sequencing skills, and their ability to explain their thinking.

Children's books about the seashore

A House for a Hermit Crab by Eric Carle

Hooray for Fish! by Lucy Cousins

The Sea Below my Toes by Charlotte Guillain and Jo Empson

How to Find an Octopus and Other Sea Creatures by Ruth Heller

Clem and Crab by Fiona Lumbers

Seashore by Steve Parker

Room on our Rock by Kate and Jol Temple

The Big Big Sea by Martin Waddell and Jennifer Eachus

The Seashore Book by Charlotte Zolotov and Wendell Minor

