

MAKING AND USING THE PICTURE BLOCKS

Young children learn best through hands-on manipulative play. And what could be more “hands-on” than blocks? They also learn best when their parents, care-givers, and teachers get down to their level and play with them. They develop concepts and vocabulary as the adults have conversations with them, putting words to what they are doing and names to the objects around them. And if everyone is having fun in a relaxed atmosphere, more learning will take place.

THE PICTURE BLOCKS

These blocks have been designed to allow for lots of hands-on play. Blocks lend themselves to many different kinds of games and activities, such as stacking, lining up in a row, turning them this way and that to see and talk about the pictures, and carrying them from here to there and back again.

The pictures on these blocks cover subjects in which young children are very much interested: animals, food, toys, and things we see in the house and outdoors. Playing with the blocks gives you lots of opportunities to talk about the pictures and relate them to the Bible Stories you want to introduce or review.

PUTTING THE BLOCKS TOGETHER

You will need some half-gallon cardboard milk or juice cartons, the picture squares in the packet, a glue stick, and some clear self-adhesive plastic which you have cut into 5" squares.

Each block will take two cartons. Cut them down to a height of 3¾". Turn one upside down and push it into the other carton as far as it will go, forming a square block. Cut out six pictures. It is best if each block has a theme: food, animals, toys, transportation, etc.

Cut the clear, self-adhesive plastic into 5" squares. You will need six for each block. Remove the backing from one of the squares and put it on the table, sticky side up. Place a picture in the middle of the square, picture side down. Cut diagonally across the corners, removing the excess plastic. Rub the back of the picture with the glue stick. Turn it over and apply it to one side of the block, rubbing it down. Pull the plastic down over each side and rub thoroughly. Continue this procedure until all six pictures have been applied to the block. Now you are ready to play.

STACKING AND BUILDING

Show the children how to stack the blocks on top of each other. Or line them up in a row. Call attention to the pictures and talk about them.

CARRYING BLOCKS FROM HERE TO THERE

Toddlers love to practice their walking and this game will give them a reason to do it. One teacher sits in one place with the blocks in a tub. Another teacher sits a short distance away. The children will love to get the blocks from the first teacher and take them to the other teacher, one at a time. Then back they go again, taking them the other way.

PUTTING NAMES TO THINGS

Toddlers are busy learning the names of things. As they are playing with the blocks, point to a picture and identify it. “Look at this! It’s a banana. (Or flower or tree or elephant).” Talk about the pictures you find.

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WHO CAN FIND IT?

As you and the children play with the blocks, ask for specific pictures. “Who can find the flower? Who can find the apple? Who can find a bunny? Who can find a fish?”

WHO MADE IT?

Everything was made by God. Play a Question & Answer Game. Point to a picture. “Who made apples?” Teach the children to answer, “God did!”

TELLING GOD THANK-YOU

Hand out the blocks. Ask the children to find pictures they like and point to them. “Katie likes bunnies! I’m glad God made bunnies. Let’s tell Him thank-you.” Encourage the children to say, “Thank-you, God.” When all have had a turn to show a picture, one of the teachers ends the prayer. Demonstrate how you fold your hands. Sh-h-h-h. We’re having our quiet time with God. “Dear God, thank-you for all these things. We love you. Amen.”

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Point to an animal picture. “See the pig? Who made pigs? God did! What do pigs say?” Oink, oink, oink. Continue with other animals. It is best to choose the animals with distinctive sounds.

THE PUTTING-AWAY GAME

This is as important as playing with the blocks. It can even be fun! Make a game of putting the blocks into their box or basket. As each toddler brings a block to put away, tell it good-bye. “Good-bye, Little Mouse. Good-bye, Butterfly. Good-bye Mr. Pig. We had fun today. See you next time!”

SAFETY FIRST

Discourage throwing the blocks as the corners may hit someone on the head or in the eye. If the children begin to throw, play the Putting Away Game. Then start another activity.

DO IT AGAIN

Children learn by doing things over and over. They remember something from the time before and you have a chance to introduce something new. For instance, the first time you play with the blocks, do Putting Names To Things. Next time repeat that game and add Who Can Find It? After the children have learned the names of things and can find them when you call for them, play Who Made It? If you break things down into small parts your children will learn. This is how God says to do it in Isaiah 28:10. Precept upon precept. Line upon line. Here a little, there a little.