

A bucket full of surprises

Early Years play activity - SEND



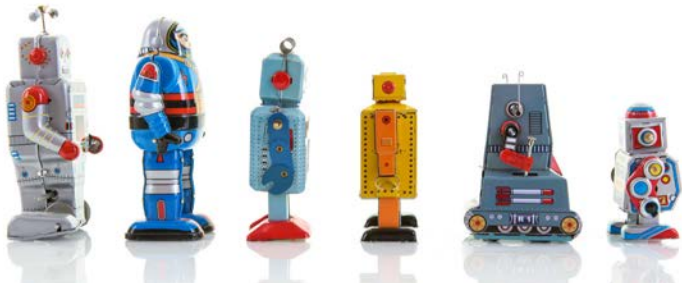
0 to 19
TORBAY
for you

This activity helps to teach children to focus their attention on the adult-led agenda quickly.

This focus needs to happen fast. We don't want to resort to persuasion, bribery or compulsion; instead, we want the children to be irresistibly drawn. A lidded bucket is a device that allows us to bring that about.

Source attribution: Gina Davies (article)

- The bucket is a non-see-through container that holds a selection of small wind-up, pop-up, musical or mechanical toys that the children will find visually appealing, but which they have never seen before.
- Novelty value is key, so you need to build up a collection of lots of different items to maintain the element of surprise.
- Having cleared the environment of distractions, seat the children opposite you with any supporting adults by their side. In keeping with good visual communication practice, start by drawing a bucket on a little whiteboard and write 'bucket' underneath.
- Set the scene by singing a song or reciting a rhyme, before taking the lid off the bucket and pulling out one of its secrets.
- Keep language to a minimum at this point to encourage the children to look at the object,



pay attention to it and engage visually. Then you are teaching directly to a visual learning strength. Any additional language can come later.

- The children might look at it for a minute or so. You will be looking at it and the supporting adults will be looking at it, so you all have the same shared experience. Then you put it back in the bucket and pick out something else. It takes maybe two or three minutes to do three objects in a row.
- Then say, "It's finished", sign "finished", cross the bucket off on the board, and move on to whatever else the children were doing.
- Crucially, don't hand the toys over, since the children are still at the stage where they can only do one thing at a time. If you allow them to interact with the toy, that will absorb their attention and you will have broken the dynamic that connected them to you.
- Likewise, avoid including anything in the bucket that the children already possess and love playing with. Imagine the distress of a child, whose special interest is Thomas the Tank Engine, when he sees his favourite toy held up in front of him, but out of bounds.