



ANIMAL TRAIN



DETAILS

Staple three shoe boxes together and write “1” on the sides of the first box, “2” on the sides of the second, and “3” on the sides of the third.

Decorate the boxes to look more like a train, if you like, by drawing-on wheels and using part of a shoe box lid and a cardboard toilet paper roll center to create an engine car with a smokestack.

Have your child pick three stuffed animals that are the right size to take a ride in your shoe box train. Now make three train tickets, one for each animal. Number them “1,” “2,” “3” or write “Train” on each ticket while sounding out the letters in the word.

Have your child line up the animals to get ready to take a ride on the train and then bring the train into the station complete with train noises. Depending on your child’s age, ask or show which animal is first, second, and third in line for the train.

Have your child move the animals into the numbered cars on the train that correspond with their tickets or place in line. Try to use the words “first,” “second,” and “third” and to use other positional terms such as “before” and “after.”

Ask questions like, “Who is in the middle?” and “Who is last?” as part of your pretend play as well. Weave additional story content into your play such as where the animals are going and what they are going to do when they arrive at their destinations.

Use other boxes, chairs, the coffee table, etc. as different places to go and, as your child learns the concepts of first through third, add more boxes and talk about fourth, fifth, and sixth.

BENEFITS

This imagination inspiring activity can foster important academic skills, and is fun for children of many ages.

Benefits include:

- Encouraging one-to-one correspondence
- Developing ordinal position vocabulary and knowledge
- Practicing number labels and number recognition skills
- Fostering pretend play with logical sequences, beginnings, middles, and ends
- Writing and sounding out the letters in the word “train” will develop phonemic awareness