

Cognitive Activity 7: Identifying Objects Belonging to a Specific Group

Primary Goal

Laying the basis for understanding concepts.

Secondary Goals

Developing an understanding of parts of a whole; developing concentration; expanding object recognition and vocabulary.

Material

Work mat.

Basket.

Booklet showing ten to 12 photos or real-looking pictures — not cartoon characters — of individual objects that represent parts or members of an overall category. For example, a booklet about dogs would contain pictures of different kinds or breeds of dogs and could be made like this:

- Cut out pictures from an out-of-date calendar featuring dogs. To help keep the child's focus on one thing at a time, show just one object per picture. For example, show a dog sitting, not a dog sitting beside a tree.
- Make the booklet attractive, yet strong enough to survive enthusiastic and frequent handling. Use heavy cardstock or poster board for each page and use a glue stick to attach each photograph. To help the child focus on one thing at a time, make the pages all the same color. Use metal rings to hold the pages together so that you can add or remove pages easily.
- To reinforce left-right orientation, place each picture on the right-hand page, leaving the left-hand side blank.



- Make the booklet easily identifiable by putting a photo of something representing the category on the front cover. In this example, you could glue on the cover page a copy of one of the dog pictures from inside.
- For other booklets, choose categories that you know are familiar and interesting to the child. Examples: cats; horses; insects; human faces showing various emotions; toys; fruit; vegetables; farm animals; jungle animals; clothing; household items; musical instruments; vehicles; plants and flowers; geometrical shapes.

Presentation

- This activity appeals particularly to the interests and abilities of toddlers 18–21 months old.
- In advance, prepare the booklet and place it in the basket.
- Put the work mat in place and put the basket on the work mat. Encourage the child to help.
- Sit beside the child with the basket in front of you.
- Remove the booklet from the basket and place it on the work mat. Set the basket aside.
- Name the booklet and invite the child to look at it with you. For example, say, “Here is a little book about dogs. Let’s look inside and see all the dogs.” Make sure that the booklet faces the child so that she/he clearly sees the pages move from left to right.
- Turn to the first page and touch the first picture. Name the picture and describe it in simple terms. Emphasize what it has in common with the overall category being presented in the book. For example, say, “A dog has four legs and a waggy tail and makes a barking noise like this: ‘Woof-woof!’ Look. Here is a dog.” Touch each part of the picture as you talk about it. Speak slowly and clearly. If the child talks about the picture, listen without interrupting.
- When you and the child have looked at the first picture and talked about it, turn to the second page. Again touch the picture and talk about it with the child. Encourage the child to touch and talk about the picture.
- Repeat with the remaining pages, making sure to touch each picture as you name it.



Extension 2

- Allow the child to turn the pages if she/he chooses. If the child has a story to tell about a particular picture, listen respectfully, then turn the child's attention back to the book. For example, say, "Yes, this is a funny dog. Now let's see what dog is on the next page."
- When you and the child have looked at every picture, invite the child to continue. For example, say, "Now you look at the book." As soon as the child is concentrating on the booklet, get up quietly and let the child work on her/his own.
- When the child has finished the activity, involve the child in putting the booklet back in the basket and returning the work mat and materials to their proper places. This completes the activity.
- Make sure that the booklet presented stays available — on a low shelf, for example — for the child to work on again when she/he wishes.

Extension 1

- To maintain the child's interest, regularly add or remove pictures from the booklet.

Extension 2

- As the child acquires experience and skill, introduce pictures that show more detail and challenge the child to look more closely. For example, in a dog book, choose dogs involved in various activities, such as herding sheep or swimming.

Extension 3

- For older toddlers, make this a language activity focusing on naming. For example, name breeds of dogs in a dog book, such as St. Bernard, Pomeranian, German shepherd, poodle, and cocker spaniel, and focus on each breed's unique appearance. Or, in a book about insects, name species of insects, such as praying mantis, cockroach, ant, butterfly, and bumblebee, and focus on each insect's unique appearance. Do not hesitate to introduce unusual or complex words — most toddlers love using them.



Extension 4

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- As the child acquires experience and skill, introduce a booklet that allows you to reveal each picture in strips. Make a booklet with pictures on every other right-hand page. Cut each left-hand page into three horizontal strips. First present the booklet as usual, so the child has a chance to practice naming the pictures. Then present each page covered with any two strips from the left-hand page. Point to the part of the picture showing and invite the child to identify the picture. For example, say: “I see four furry legs. What do you think this animal is?” If the child cannot identify the picture yet, turn back the second strip and talk about what is revealed. For example, say, “Now I see a furry head, two long floppy ears, and a pink tongue. What do you think this is?” Once the child has identified the picture, invite the child to cover it up with the strips again.