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Learning Is Child's Play

Comparison Blocks

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Playing with blocks is an extremely important activity in the life of a preschool child. It is considered by educators to be one of the most important activities in which preschoolers can engage.

Small blocks, such as the *Comparison Blocks*, provide opportunities for small muscle activities. And playing with these blocks can be an enjoyable learning experience for his parents—try using them to teach your child many concepts that he will be able to relate to the world around him. Playing with as well as talking with children is no waste of time. By doing these things a parent can help a child develop language skills, a healthy self-concept, and the ability to think, plan ahead, and make decisions.

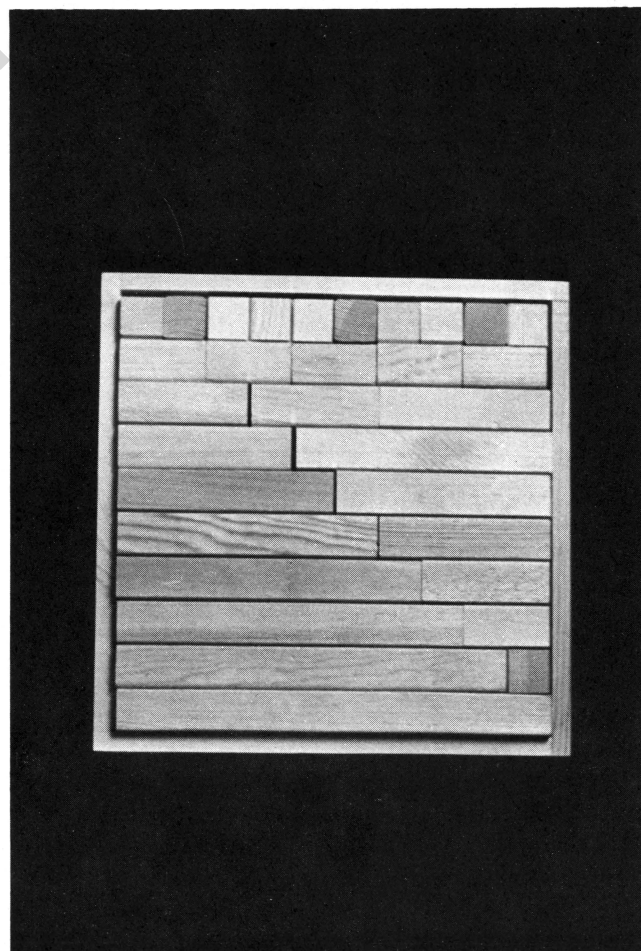
Description

Comparison Blocks consist of 10 sizes of wooden blocks in units from one to 10.

The tallest block is 10 times as tall as the shortest. The other blocks are the units between one and ten.

You can make these toys yourself. Each block, no matter how long, is one inch square. They range in length from 1 inch (11, one-inch blocks) to 10 inch (only 1 block). In blocks one through six there is more than one block. In numbers seven through 10 there is only one of each.

Probably the most practical wood (durable, clean, and inexpensive) is fir or pine. Any good lumber yard should be able to supply you with what you need.

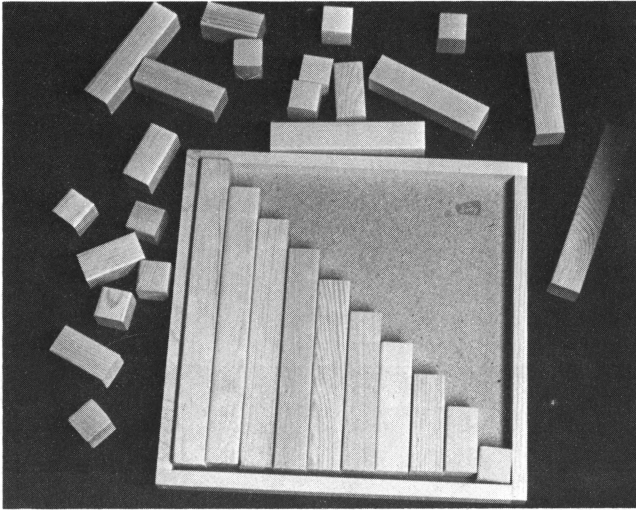


Comparison Blocks

Purpose

Several games in which different sizes of blocks are compared follow. These games are designed to promote parent/child interaction and to teach the child size relationships: tallest; shortest; middle-size; taller; shorter; same; equal to.

It will be interesting for you to watch your child at play. Does he stack the blocks in any way? Does he lay them side by side? Consider what he might be thinking and learning as he does these things.



Game I

The first game that could be played with the comparison blocks is one that teaches the concepts of tallest and shortest. Out of the 10 sizes of blocks, select the number 2, 6, and 10 blocks - all fairly contrasting in size. Place these in front of your child and say something like this, "Please show me the block that is tallest." If he selects the tallest say, "Yes, that is the tallest block Please show me the shortest block."

If the child did not select the tallest block when you asked him, tell him what he selected instead. For example, "That is the middle-sized block. Try again to pick the tallest block."

When playing games with children be positive in attitude, rather than negative. Correct the child by showing and telling him the right way something is to be done, not by saying, "No, that's not right," or "You're wrong!"

After the child seems to understand the meanings of tallest and shortest in the first game, try one more grouping of blocks to see if he really does understand. Take the number 3, number 5, and number 8 blocks this time.

They are not as contrasting in size. Again ask, "Which block is the tallest?" or "Which block is the shortest?" Continue playing with the blocks in this manner until you are sure the child understands.

Game II

This game is designed to teach the child the meanings of taller and shorter. Lay out 10 differently sized blocks in front of the child. Pick up a number 4 block and say, "Please pick a block that is taller than this one."

It is good to hand the block to the child so he can compare it's size with the other blocks. It also helps him feel that he is in control and that he is really involved in decision-making.

If the child does select a taller one, hold them side by side so he can see that they are not the same size. Ask him which one is the tallest (going back to Game I procedure). From this, ease back into showing how one block is taller than another.

When the child understands taller, initiate the same kind of activity to help him know the meaning of shorter.

Once the child has learned taller and shorter, mention that the other block is middle-sized. However, it is only to expose him to the word. It is not so important that he knows it as well as the other terms: tallest, shortest, taller, and shorter.

If at any time, your child becomes tired or bored, stop playing. He will not be learning much if he feels this way. Perhaps you will need to stop playing games altogether for that day. You could also suggest playing another game, but ask the child only once.

Children love to make up their own games and usually have amazing abilities to do so. If at any time your child wants to do this, let him. Listen to his rules and play his way. You may both learn more and have more fun too.

Game III

A third game can be played after the child has completed games one and two.

This time, pick out only four blocks (e.g. number 2, number 4, number 6, number 4). You will be stressing the concept of same size.

Say, "Please pick out the two blocks that are the same size."

If he does not, say "These two blocks are not the same size. Please try again to pick the two blocks that are the same size."

If the child does select the blocks that are the same, continue selecting those blocks that are closer together in

size to make groupings that are more and more difficult. Then you will be sure that he understands the concept of same size.

Game IV

Now that the child knows the meanings of tallest, shortest, taller, shorter, same size, and has heard middle-size, he can learn the meaning of equal to.

Take one each of the number 4 and number 6 blocks. Put them and all of the number 1 blocks on the floor between you and the child. Stand up the number 4 block and say, "Please make a tower out of these smallest blocks that is equal to the size of this block (number 4)."

If the child does it correctly, say, "Yes, it takes four of these blocks to equal this one block."

If he has trouble completing the tower, say something like this: "Your blocks are shorter than this block. Please add one more block to your tower. That will make it equal to this block."

Continue to play the game until the child understands equal to.

This game can also be played quite successfully with empty thread spools that are the same size, or anything else that would make good comparisons.

Summary

Now that you and your child have played with the *Comparison Blocks*, hopefully you realize their value and versatility. Children love to play - it's their business. And it's important. The *Comparison Blocks* are available to help you and your child achieve a working and playing relationship that can develop into a good educational experience.

Don't let your child's precious preschool years pass you by. You will both be missing out on a lot of fun — and a real opportunity to help him learn things that will aid him throughout life. And he will not only be learning the meanings of words like tallest, taller, shortest, shorter, equal to, etc, but also that he has a parent—a friend who loves him, who cares about him and what he thinks, who thinks that he is important, and can do things well. Isn't that what we all want?



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