

Being outside and enjoying sunshine is such an uplifting experience. Butterflies fascinate children with their attractive wings and fluttering. Looking at these beautiful bugs slows busy minds and helps us focus.

Key vocabulary

- Butterfly, butterflies
- Wing(s), leg(s)
- Head, antenna/antennae
- Fly, flies, flying
- Flower
- Nectar
- Pollen
- Yellow, orange, red, blue, green, brown, white, black
- Camouflage
- Smooth/furry
- Curve/point
- Open/closed
- Big/bigger/biggest
- Small/smaller/smallest
- Wide/wider/widest
- Sort
- Compare
- Similarities
- Differences
- Different from / similar to
- Thorax, abdomen
- Egg, caterpillar, chrysalis



Activity ideas

Using the butterfly stones

- The children will enjoy talking about the similarities and differences between the butterflies, which is good for descriptive vocabulary and observational skills. Their different shapes, wing types, and markings will enable children to develop their comparing and sorting skills.
 - Can you find one with orange tips?
 - How does this butterfly feel?



- The butterflies can be used as characters for imaginary play. Great for developing storytelling skills.
- Go on a butterfly hunt, comparing the butterfly stones with any butterflies you see. Using a magnifier requires both spatial awareness and good motor skills, so practise using one with the children beforehand.
- Look at the underside of butterfly wings. The undersides are often more muted. The bright side is to attract other butterflies, while the reverse acts as camouflage. Why is camouflage important? What other animals are camouflaged? Why do you think a tiger is camouflaged?
- Make imprints of the butterflies in play dough. This works in the reverse too by pressing the dough onto the stone. A good activity for learning about levels of pressure.



- Rotate a number of the dough imprints so that the children need to orientate each butterfly stone to place it correctly in its imprint. This will help to develop spatial awareness and fine motor skills.
- Take rubbings of the stones using wax crayons.
- Examine the markings of the butterflies using a magnifier. Ask the children to describe what they see.
- Ask one child to describes a hidden butterfly stone to a partner, who has to guess which one it is. Create a crib sheet of photographs of the stones to refer to.
- Hide the butterfly stones in a bin full of farfalle dried pasta. Ask a child to find a butterfly, remove it so the others can't see and describe it them so that they can guess which one it is.



Learning more

- Conduct a butterfly survey, using a tally chart to record how many and what types of butterflies are seen during a given period. Use a digital device to take photographs of those you see and compare them with the butterfly stones to see if any of them are the same.
- Use play dough to model the life cycle of a butterfly: egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, and butterfly.
- Create an area of butterfly-friendly plants. Try buddleia, sedum and hebe. Involve the children in buying, planting, watering and caring for them. Once in flower, allow children time to observe butterflies feeding. Discuss how they do this using their long proboscis to reach the flower's nectar.

Make and create

- Read Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. There are numerous ideas online, but as a starting point make the caterpillar by threading cotton reels and or egg box sections on to string. This can also be done with slices of fruit/food, some of which could be the same as the food mentioned in the book. A good activity for developing fine motor control.
- Use mirrors to explore the symmetry of simple flat shapes before investigating the wing patterns of the butterfly stones. Create symmetrical butterfly wing patterns using art materials.
- Challenge the children to fill a template of butterfly wings with a symmetrical pattern. Stick a pair of such wings to a clothes peg, which can then be pegged to a tree or shrub to create a display.
- Stick four leaves to a stick to create a butterfly shape. Decorate the leaf wings with matching patterns.
- Draw round the butterfly stones with a pencil, cut them out and use them for collages. This is an effective and enjoyable way to practise fine motor and scissor skills.



Games you can play

- Make a very hungry caterpillar obstacle course, with items representing some of the foods. Use tyres, boxes, log slices, and so on. Invite suggestions from the children as to what to include and what it might represent.

- Make a range of butterfly shapes cut out of paper. Give one to each child to place on one side of a table and then blow it to the other side using a straw. Stage some butterfly races. Why did the shape win? Is this a good size/shape for a winning butterfly? Where is the best place to put the straw? Is it better to blow hard or soft?

Extending the learning

- Create butterfly wreathes. Use a circle of card or a cane wreath framework to decorate with butterfly shapes created in different ways: painted, made from foil, cut outs of pages from unwanted books. Display the wreathes on doors round your setting, whatever the time of year.
- Drip some marbling inks into a shallow tray of water. Blend the inks gently to create a pattern. Lay a sheet of paper on the surface of the water. Gently lift it off and lay it down to dry. Once dry, cut out a butterfly shape to display.



Children's books featuring butterflies

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

A Butterfly is Patient by Dianna Hutts Aston and Sylvia Long

How Does a Butterfly Grow? published by Dorling Kindersley

RSPB First Book of Butterflies and Moths by Derek Niemann

Butterflies to Spot by Kate Nolan and Stephanie Fizer Coleman

Ben Plants a Butterfly Garden by Kate Petty and Axel Scheffler