

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Activity: Autumn leaf printing

As the leaves begin to fall from the trees this autumn, collect a range of different types of leaves for children to use for leaf printing.

This creative activity provides an opportunity to discuss with children the effects of the changing seasons as well as exploring, identifying and creating leaf patterns using the medium of paint.

Learning aims

- Discuss patterns in nature
- Identify and describe different patterns and shapes
- Notice similarities and differences.

Resources

- A range of fallen leaves
- Paper
- Ready mixed water-soluble paint or tempera paint (autumn colours)
- Paint brushes.



Activity outline

1. Collect fallen leaves of various shapes and sizes. The wider the variety the better as this will provide opportunity for discussion about colour, pattern, shape, similarities and differences
2. Discuss with children why leaves begin to fall from trees in autumn. This will introduce the pattern of the seasons to children and how this repeats each year and the effects the different seasons have on nature.

With shorter days and less sunshine, trees begins to lose chlorophyll from their leaves (chlorophyll makes leaves green, absorbing sunlight and converting it into sugars to feed the tree). As a result the leaves begin to change colour and eventually fall from the tree as they do not need them anymore. A tree without leaves uses less energy which helps them to survive over the winter. In the spring, new leaves begin to grow, starting the process all over again.

3. Children may be familiar with evergreens such as Christmas (fir) trees, so be sure to add these into the discussion, providing a clipping, if possible. Evergreens do not lose leaves and remain green all year round. This is because their leaves, or needles, have a waxy coating which protects them from the cold so the tree can survive the winter

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4. With the children, prepare paints in a range of autumn colours which come from your discussions such as green, yellow, orange, brown, red, etc.
5. Invite children to choose a leaf and encourage them to explore this and describe what they see and feel
6. Encourage children to paint different leaves and print them onto paper to see what patterns they make. The leaves should be flipped so that the underside (which is bumpier from the veins) is facing up. Invite children to paint the entire surface of the leaf with their choice of colour/s
7. Children then place the leaf, painted side down, on paper. Explain how they should press firmly down on the leaf for several seconds to transfer the paint from the leaf to the paper
8. Remove the leaf to reveal a leaf print
9. Children can repeat the process using different colours and leaves to explore the effects
10. Engage children in discussions about similarities and differences that they notice.

Extension ideas

- Collect more fallen leaves and add these into your continuous provision as an enhancement for children to sort and explore
- Provide a range of nature pattern prints in your creative area for children to copy e.g. image of ladybirds, butterflies, flowers, zebras, tigers etc.

NDNA products to support you with this activity

- [EYFS: Expressive Arts and Design - training](#)