At a young age, most children begin to notice the differences and similarities of items around them. When we draw a child’s attention to those similarities and differences, it is called sorting or classification. In fact, classification is one of the first skills a young child learns when she becomes aware of the world around her. Those sorting abilities will eventually build a foundation to help the child learn basic mathematical, literacy and scientific developmental skills.

When a child begins working on classification skills, color and size are the most common and developmentally appropriate for young children. It is important to begin with items that have the simplest attributes to recognize. Eventually, shapes, letters and other items will also be used for classification and sorting. It is important to remember that children should not be sorting items that are unfamiliar. For example, until the child learns shapes and their attributes, adults should not use shapes for classification and sorting activities.

The Circus Sorting Train contains items that will help children begin learning the skills of classification. The pouches on the train can be used for sorting, but are also a great place to store the manipulatives between uses. Children do not always need to use the pouches for sorting. The items can be used on a tabletop or floor as the child learns visual discrimination.

Here’s What You Get!

• Circus Train
• 12 Animals

• 16 Shapes
• Activity Guide
Here are a few suggested activities by age:

For the younger toddler:

- Identification: Have the child look through the circus animals and identify the animals. (EM4)*
- Size Comparison: Draw attention to the three different sizes that are available for each animal. Help the child understand how to identify the largest, the medium size and the smallest of each animal. (EM6)*
- Have the child do this for each animal.
- Allow the child to group (or classify) all of the animals according to size. For example, group all large animals together. Repeat for the other two sizes.
- Have the child group each size and place them in one of the pouches of the train.
- Color Sorting: The animals and shapes in the Circus Sorting Train are great ways to begin to recognize basic colors. (EM6)*

For Preschool Children:

- Shape Identification: When the child has developed the ability to recognize shapes, use the shape manipulatives to classify and sort. (MA3, MA8)**
- Using the shape manipulatives, allow the child to identify each shape. Preschool children should have a good foundation of classification, patterning and number sense prior to thoroughly understanding shapes.
- Have the child sort the shapes by color or size.
- Have the child sort the items by shape. Be careful to make sure that the child is recognizing the shape and not sorting just by color.

*POCET™ Infant and Toddler (Preschool Observation Checklist and Evaluation Tool), is a tool for caregivers to support and encourage development through observation and tracking. It is published by Discount School Supply. POCET™ identifies developmental milestones for infants and toddlers across eight domains of early learning. The numbered guidelines referenced in this activity guide refer to the POCET™ Infant and Toddler product for our customers who use it in their classrooms. The guidelines in POCET™ are general enough to apply to virtually any Infant/Toddler program. For more information on POCET™ Infant and Toddler, visit www.DiscountSchoolSupply.com/POCET.

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