

ROOTS & RAINBOOTS NATURE CO.

Nature Play for Littles · Ages 2–5

Activity Card Deck

Facilitator Edition

21 activities · regulation-first
Curriculum Framework v1.0

rootsrainboots.com

Open & Explore

The Collection Box as Ritual Object

5-10 MIN • ALL WEATHER • SENSORY / REGULATION

WHY THIS MATTERS

Every learning session begins with a ritual of arrival. The deliberate opening of the box cues the child's nervous system to shift into exploratory mode. Ritual objects help young children build predictability, which is the foundation of emotional safety.

SETUP & FACILITATION

- 1 Bring the closed collection box to an outdoor space or threshold area.
- 2 Sit together. Place the box between you.
- 3 “Shall we see what's inside today?” — lift the lid together slowly.
- 4 Remove items one at a time. Name each: rough bark, smooth stone, soft moss.
- 5 Let the child lead after the first item. Observe what they reach for first.
- 6 Take the box outside and continue exploration in a comfortable spot.

WHAT CHILDREN ARE BUILDING

- Sensory vocabulary
- Object permanence and ritual
- Transition regulation
- Child-led curiosity

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Child demonstrates calm, focused attention during the opening sequence.
- ✓ Child uses at least one sensory descriptor word (prompted or unprompted).
- ✓ Child selects an item of interest and engages with it for 30+ seconds.
- ✓ Caregiver successfully uses the opening ritual to support session transition.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Your whole collection — the box itself is the ritual object

FACILITATOR NOTE

The opening is as important as any activity. Do not rush it. The pace of the opening sets the pace of the session.

Loose Parts Sorting

Order from the Natural World

10–15 MIN · ALL WEATHER · COGNITIVE / FINE MOTOR

WHY THIS MATTERS

Sorting is one of the earliest mathematical operations. When children sort natural materials — by size, colour, texture, shape — they are building classification skills, logical thinking, and the ability to notice difference and sameness. Natural materials offer more variation than manufactured sorting toys, making this cognitively richer.

SETUP & FACILITATION

- 1 Spread your loose parts and treasures on a flat surface or the box lid.
- 2 Introduce a sorting tray or a few shallow dishes. “Can you find things that feel the same?”
- 3 Do not pre-sort. Let the child determine categories.
- 4 Narrate without directing: “You put all the round ones together. I see a pattern.”
- 5 Offer small containers or a muffin tin as additional sorting vessels.
- 6 Re-sort by a different rule (colour, size, texture) for extension.

WHAT CHILDREN ARE BUILDING

- Classification and categorisation
- Pre-mathematical grouping
- Fine motor pincer grip
- Sustained attention
- Language for attributes

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Child independently creates at least one sorting category without prompting.
- ✓ Child can identify their own sorting rule when asked.
- ✓ Child demonstrates controlled pincer grasp when handling small objects.
- ✓ Child engages with sorting task for minimum 8 minutes before transition.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Loose parts — wooden rounds or slices, smooth stones
- Treasures — feather, bark, moss, lichen, seed pods
- A sorting tray, muffin tin, or shallow dishes
- The box compartments, or small containers

FACILITATOR NOTE

Resist imposing adult sorting logic. A child who sorts by “things I like” is still building categorisation. Follow their system.

THIS IS A FREE PREVIEW

The full 21-card Facilitator Edition

You have just read a complete, unedited excerpt — not a teaser. Everything below is what the full edition adds.

ALL 21 CARDS, FRONT AND REVERSE

You have seen two complete cards above. The deck runs from Open & Explore through Nature Journaling — sensory investigation, heavy work, regulation resets, pattern work, and closing rituals.

PRINT-READY AT 4×6 INCHES

Two-up on US Letter with dashed cut lines. A real deck off a home printer, no special stock required.

REGULATION NAMED BEFORE CONTENT

Each card states its regulation goal before its content goal, because a dysregulated two-year-old cannot identify a leaf.

WANT THE SESSION PLANS TOO?

The Educator Bundle adds four complete outdoor session plans and the Gather Your Own Collection sheet for \$59 — \$30 more than the cards alone.

\$29 · OR INCLUDED IN THE \$59 EDUCATOR BUNDLE

43 printable pages. Instant download.

rootsrainboots.org/curriculum

Written at the parks where it is taught.

Roots & Rainboots Nature Co. · Slow childhood. Strong roots.