

Sheep and wool



Sheep and wool



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Sheep and wool



Introduction

Over the years LEAF Education (formerly Farming & Countryside Education) has produced a wide range of e-activity booklets covering many topics including rural crafts, activities at shows and events and seasonal activities.

Within these e-booklets there have been resources with a focus on sheep or wool and so we decided to bring these together into a new publication.

Lambing visits are extremely popular in the spring and, providing correct health and safety guidance is followed, these can be rewarding and educational experiences for children.

At other times of the year a visit to a sheep farm can incorporate a variety of curriculum links including geography, literacy, science and art so that teachers can include in their classroom teaching such topics as growing, lifecycles, healthy living and materials. A farm visit can stimulate creative and descriptive writing and dynamic artwork and outdoor visits often have a surprising and always memorable effect on children and their subsequent work.

So why not have a go at some of the activities described here? They can all be carried out in the classroom or school grounds but preparation is essential. You might also like to consider some of the activities as an introduction to a farm visit or as follow up work. There is a section offering guidance on farm visits.

Have fun!

Sheep and wool

Sheep on a stick

Materials required

This activity needs a lot of “assembly” of materials and preparation in advance. You will need some scoured sheep’s wool from various breeds (or shredded paper if you cannot source wool), a template sheep shape – cut out lots on thin card; cut out shapes from black card for head and ears, pipe cleaners cut in half, eyes, glue, tape and lolly sticks – all available from craft stores.

Instructions

Some adult supervision is necessary.

Children stick the sheep’s head to its body and its ears to the top of its head at either side.

Using tape behind the ears they add twisted pipe cleaners for horns. Children stick wool or shredded paper onto the body but not the head. Using some lengths of wool they make some legs; tie the strands of wool together in a knot to make the sheep’s feet. Add the eyes and a lolly stick by which to hold the sheep!

Comments

This activity can produce a very attractive “sheep” for the children to take away and can provide a focal point for further discussion work about sheep.



Sheep and wool

Pom pom sheep

Materials required

For each sheep cut two circular pieces of card with a smaller ring cut in the centre, large enough for a small ball of wool to be passed through. Have available small balls of wool of appropriate colours, felt face shapes (ready cut) and eyes. Scissors and glue are needed.

Instructions

Each child has two card circles and is shown how to wind the wool round and round for about three layers.

With adult supervision, the wool is cut carefully between the two outer layers of the card rings. A length of wool is wrapped in between the two outer edges and is pulled tight and knotted. This should create the pom pom!

A face shape and eyes can be glued on.

Comments

Adult guidance is usually necessary for this activity. Many children will demonstrate immense patience in creating their sheep and adults are often enticed to join in!



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Sheepdog game

Materials required

Shepherd costume (optional) - hat and crook

Collie dog ears head band (template provided as separate download)

Sheep ears head band (template provided as separate download)

Instructions

Discuss how sheep are prey animals as they have their eyes and ears on the side of their heads so they can be aware of what is going on all around them. They like to be with the other sheep and will move as a group as much as possible.

Sheep dogs are predators, as far as the sheep are concerned: they have ears and eyes that face forwards so they can focus on their “prey”. Shepherds use this fact to help them move sheep, as sheep will only let the dog get so close before they move away.

One child will be the shepherd and one the dog, the rest of the group are sheep.

Shepherd chooses a name for their dog and uses the commands “Come bye” to send the dog to the right and “away” to send the dog left (the sheep will move away accordingly) and “Lie down” to stop.

Choose a course to move the sheep around but only tell the shepherd not the sheep or the dog!

When the course is complete the shepherd will say “that’ll do” to the dog.

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Comments

To make this activity more challenging the shepherd could have a more complicated course to move the sheep through or work against the clock.

(Based on an activity from Richard Savory of the Sheep Show.)



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Counting sheep in Old English

Materials required

Some sheep — real or pretend

Instructions

Explain about Anglo-Saxon English and old counting systems. (You can find details at the link below)

It has always been important for shepherds to keep a count of their sheep, knowing whether any have died or strayed or whether there are new lambs. Even today numbers are important so that farmers can pay the right taxes or receive the correct grants which are often based on the number of their animals.

Regional variations on the counting system “yan, tan tethera...” are provided here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yan_tan_tethera

Comments

These old counting methods were also used for knitting stitches!

Counting imaginary sheep is also recommended as a way of getting off to sleep if someone is struggling with insomnia. The repetitive nature of the task is said to calm the mind.

Ask pupils to find out about more sheep sayings—can they explain any of them?

<http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/sheep>

<http://www.special-dictionary.com/proverbs/keywords/sheep/>

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Weaving friendship bracelets

Materials required

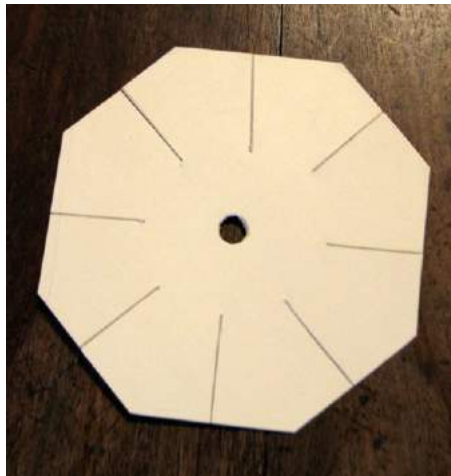
Small piece of card

Lengths of different coloured wool

Instructions

Make your loom:

Cut an octagon shape out of card. Then cut slots in each side and a hole in the middle.



String your loom

Cut 3 pieces of wool about 1m long, fold in half to make a loop, then use a 50cm long piece to secure the loop.



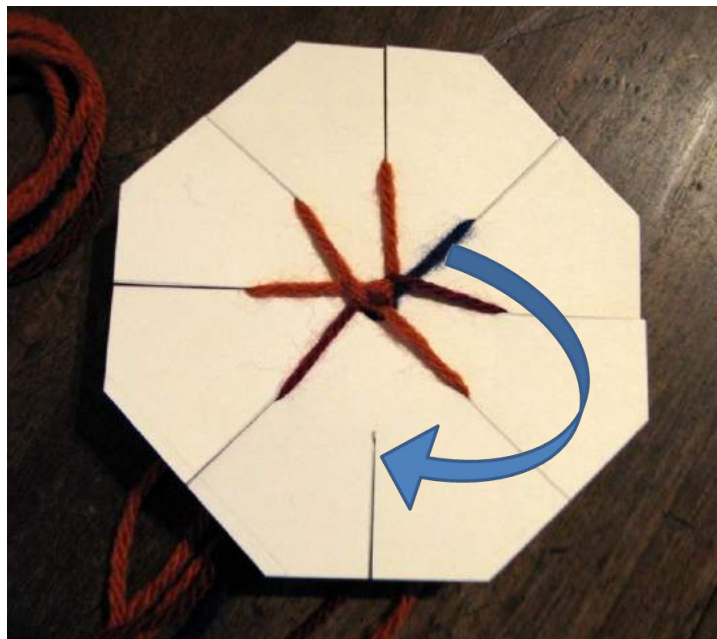
Sheep and wool

Push the loop through the hole in your loom and then slide the threads into the slots.



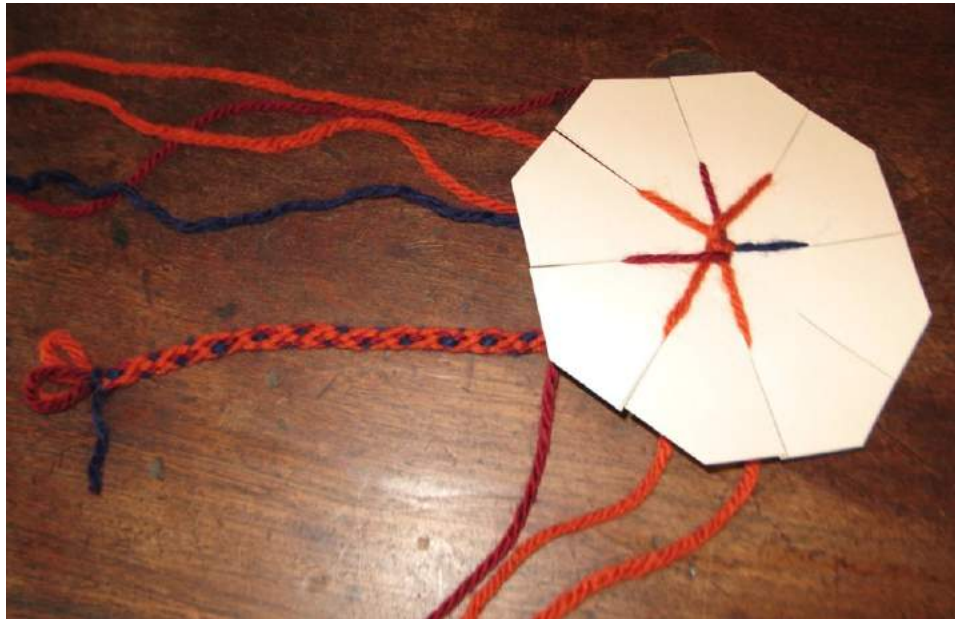
Start weaving

Hold the card flat with the empty slot in front of you. Take the 3rd thread to your right and jump it over the other two into the empty slot.



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Turn the card so the empty slot is in front of you again, jump the 3rd thread to the right over and into the empty slot.



Keep repeating until your bracelet is long enough. Remove from the loom and tie the ends.



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More weaving activities

If you want to try more weaving activities, take a look at this publication which contains background information about weaving and step by step instructions for a colourful weaving project suitable for the classroom.

<http://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk/resources/849>



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Felt making

Felt making is an ancient craft that maintains its popularity all over the world. Felt is made using wool and the fibres are matted together using friction.

This is a satisfying craft which can achieve results in a comparatively short period of time.

Clare Wolstencroft provided the instructions how to make the felt and then to produce felt flowers which could be used as brooches, hair decorations or as adornments to be added to accessories.

Materials required

A ping pong ball for each person

Wool tops (search the internet for suppliers). Farmers can use wool from their own sheep but for health and safety reasons it should be washed and will need combing before use.

Soap

Bowls of warm water with a squirt of washing up liquid
(one bowl of hotter water for the teacher/leader)

Small sharp scissors (health and safety – delegate cutting to teacher/leader if appropriate)

Smallish buttons

Needle and thread (make sure it is small enough to go through the holes of the buttons!)

Safety pins and hair elastics

Instructions

Each person takes four thin layers of wool top (about 4" or 10cm square). They can be the same or different colours depending on the final effect you want to achieve.

Place the four layers on top of each other but alternate the direction of the fibres.

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Now wrap the combined four layers tightly around the ping pong ball and dip it in the warm, soapy water.

Roll the ball briskly in your hands and the fibres will begin to felt.



The teacher/leader may need to help smaller children by taking the ball from them and dipping in the hotter water to get the process going.

Occasionally soap your hands to make the process easier. Keep going till you have a nice, smooth ball.

The felt now has to be cut with the sharp scissors making a cross shape half way round the ball. (If your flower is to have more than four petals, you will need to adapt the number of cuts.) The felt can then be peeled away from the ball.



Sew a button to the centre of your flower and then attach to a hair elastic to make a hair decoration, or to a safety pin to make a brooch or leave it as it is!



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Spinning using a pencil

Hand spinning is the art of twisting wool fibres into a continuous thread and can be done by hand or by using a spinning wheel. Bobbie Harvey showed us a very simple technique using a pencil! Using hairbrushes or carding combs, you need to comb out the fleece to remove lumps and tangles.

Materials:

Sheep's wool

Hairbrushes or carding combs

Pencils

Instructions:

Begin by "combing" fleeces which can be done with hairbrushes if the more specialised (and expensive) carding combs are not available.

Lay the fleece out with fibres all roughly pointing along the line, to make a "sausage" of fibres.

Hold a pencil in your left hand and keep that hand still whilst winding the fleece around the pencil with your right hand until about 30 cm is wound around.



Then pull the fleece gently back off the pencil (allowing the pencil to spin in your left hand). This will start to put a twist in the wool.

Repeat a couple of times and then wind that section onto the pencil and save it, move along the sausage of fibre repeating first steps until you have a thread saved on your pencil.

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Weaving with sticks

Simplicity is key. No looms for this, just two pencils and a length of string!

Materials:

The wool you have spun on your pencil (supplemented if you haven't enough)

Two pencils or sticks

String or wool thread to act as warp thread

Needle

Pipe cleaners

Stick on eyes (from craft suppliers)

Instructions:

Attach string or wool to one end of each pencil or weaving stick to act as the weft thread.

Hold the sticks in your left hand, keeping them parallel with about a 1" gap between them.

Using the woollen thread that you have spun, trap the end with your thumb or make a loop and pop it over one stick. Weave a figure of 8 around the sticks, gently sliding the weave down the sticks as you work but don't push it all off the end until you have made the full length of weaving you require.



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When you have enough (25cm for making a sheep) slide the weaving to the end of the warp threads and knot them as close to the top of your weave as you can. The weaving can then be rolled up, held in place with a stitch to make a sheep with wobbly eyes and pipe cleaners for legs/ears!



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More ideas!

You can find a wide variety of resources about sheep on Countryside Classroom.

These include cut out and create 3D sheep; a video about the work of a sheep farmer; lesson plans, photographs and much more.

<http://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk/resources?search=sheep>

Sheep



LEAF Education worked with the Heritage Crafts Association to produce further feltmaking resources for the classroom and these are available here:

<http://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk/resources/847>

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Lambing

Find out what's involved at lambing time:

<http://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk/features/82>



And here are five suggestions for following up a lambing visit:

<http://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk/features/51>



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Sheep farm visits



LEAF Education can help you to find a sheep farmer who may either welcome you onto the farm or visit your school. Contact us to find out about your Regional Education Consultant.

Or try searching the map <http://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk/places> and put in your postcode or nearest town and then zoom out to see whether there are farms you can visit in your area.

Always consult the Industry Code of Practice—Advice to Teachers and Others to make sure you have a safe visit.

<http://www.visitmyfarm.org/component/k2/item/339-industry-code-of-practice>

Any farm you visit must have handwashing facilities with soap and warm water and children must wash their hands thoroughly after touching animals and before eating.

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LEAF Education

LEAF Education works with school communities to help children and young adults understand the connection between farming and their daily lives.

Contact us

LEAF Education
Avenue J
Stoneleigh Park
Warwickshire
CV8 2LG

enquiries@face-online.org.uk

☎ 024 7641 3911

🐦 @LEAF_Education

📘 facebook.com/FarmingAndCountrysideEducation/