



Apple Week



It's October down on the farm, and Tractor Ted is helping to harvest apples. Apples are a favourite for adults and children alike, and organising a series of apple-themed activities helps children to learn about this delicious fruit.

THIS ACTIVITY...

- encourage children to eat apples
- enable children to learn about apples
- offer lots of opportunity for exploring tastes, smells and textures
- encourage children to investigate similarities, differences and change
- offer the opportunity to match, sort and count
- introduce the apple as a tool for creating art

WHAT TO DO

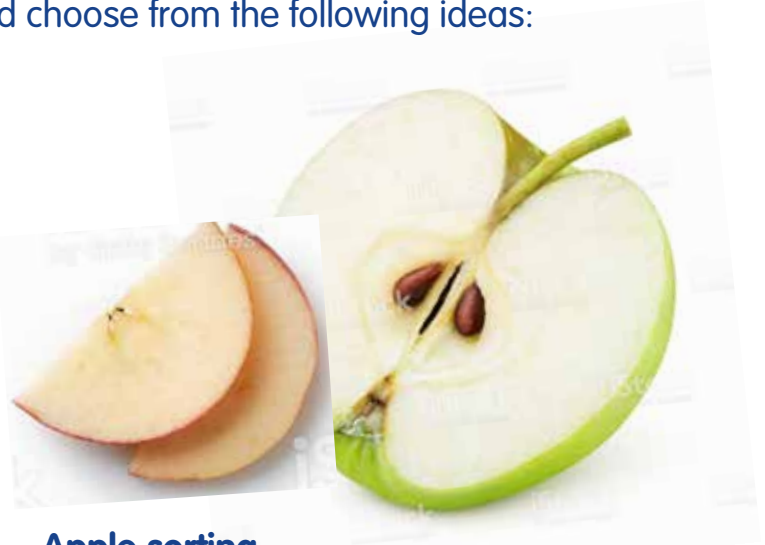
Organise a week of apple-themed activities and exploration, inspired by traditional 'Apple Day' celebrations (see box). Pick and choose from the following ideas:

Exploring apples

Cut different coloured apples into circles and boats. Compare a whole apple with a core; why don't we eat the core, and what's inside it? Look at the seeds in the centre of an apple, dig them out and count them. Compare the skin and the flesh of the apples, and talk about the different colours and textures.

What if?

Leave some cut apple pieces on the shelf. What changes can you spot? Does it make a difference if you sprinkle the flesh with lemon juice, or store the apple pieces in a jar of water? Put chunks of apple outdoors and leave for several days. What happens to them? How long can you leave an apple in the fruit bowl before it starts to go wrinkly? Compare old, wrinkled apples with fresh, new apples.



Apple sorting

Gather different varieties of apple in a range of sizes and colours. Include large Bramley cooking apples, green apples such as Granny Smiths, yellow apples such as Golden Delicious and red apples such as Pink Lady. Put the apples in a large basket, and place one of each variety in smaller baskets. Show the children how to sort the apples into groups, and count how many are in each group.



Taste tests

Taste the different varieties. Which ones do the children like best? Can they tell the difference between a sour cooking apple and a sweet desert apple from taste alone? If children are comfortable, ask them to wear a blindfold so they rely on their sense of taste alone.

Tuff Spot apples

Put apple peel, grated apple and whole apples in the Tuff Tray or water table. Add jugs, nets, spoons and sieves and encourage free exploration. Compare how the whole apple, grated apple and peelings behave in the water. What floats, and what sinks? Provide towels and check how easy it is to dry the apples.

Hunt the apple

Hide different varieties of apple in the indoor and outdoor setting for an 'apple hunt'. Give older children an apple to hold and challenge them to search for a matching apple. Count how many apples they have managed to find.

Apple art

Place paper in the base of a shallow box, dip a whole apple in paint and roll it around to make apple tracks. Cut an apple into chunks, push in cocktail sticks to make handles and use for printing shapes. Cut apples in half and print whole apple shapes. Join apple chunks with cocktail sticks to create mini apple sculptures (supervising carefully as the cocktail sticks are sharp).



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Once an activity is finished, rescue as many of the apples and apple pieces as possible. Setting pets such as guinea pigs can have small chunks of peeled apple as an occasional treat – and the rest can be added to the compost bucket. Talk to the children about how you are re-cycling the apples rather than throwing them away.
- With older children, cut apples into halves and quarters and count the pieces. Give each child in a group of four a quarter apple, and emphasise that you are sharing one apple between four children.
- Introduce new vocabulary whenever you can. Talk about the apples tasting sweet, sharp or sour. Stroke the smooth, shiny, waxy skins and touch the moist, juicy, sticky flesh. Listen out for a crisp, crunchy sound when you bite into the apple.
- Make sure that any activity involving apple skins and pips is supervised carefully. Talk to the children about how they must not eat the pips or the apple core. Be aware that small chunks of apple can be a choking hazard.
- Throughout the week, offer apple treats at snack and lunch time. Decorate the setting with posters, red and green garlands and hangings made from dried apple rings (see Three Ways with Apples). Put books with an apple theme in your book area.
- Traditional apple-themed celebrations take place on a single day, hence the name 'Apple Day'. For young children, spreading the activities across a week or two is less overwhelming. It also gives the children a chance to try every activity – and you the chance to extend any activities that prove particularly popular.



Apple Day

Apple Day celebrations traditionally take place on the 21st October, although they can be held at any time during the month. It's a recent tradition, with the first Apple Day being held in 1990 by a charity called Common Ground. The purpose of the event is to celebrate apples and apple orchards – and through them, the richness and diversity of our local landscape and wildlife.

