

Felt fishing set

Many children have never been fishing or even watched the boats in the harbour bringing in a catch. Have you ever taken your child to an aquarium to see the different shapes and colours of the fish? What a treat, if you could arrange for her to experience one of these activities. She will imitate what she has seen and use her imagination to extend this into play.



TEACH YOUR CHILD TO FISH

People have fished for food for many thousands of years. Once you show your child how to fish, she will find it a natural activity. Demonstrate how to lower the line gently into the water (which could simply be a blue muslin cloth spread out on the floor), as swinging the rod over her shoulder as fly fishermen do could be hazardous. To catch a fish requires skill, as the rod magnet has to make contact with the fish in order to lift it up and swing it into a waiting basket. As your child becomes more skilful, she will enjoy trying to catch more

Hints and tips

- You can use thin, strong branches instead of dowelling for the fishing rods.
- Use differently coloured cord for the fishing lines, so that each child can have her own.
- Use blue cloth to make a pool.
- Make fish in a range of colours, shapes and sizes.
- Provide baskets into which your child can drop the caught fish.
- Ensure washers are firmly attached to both the fish and the rods.
- Make sure your smaller washers are steel and not aluminium, which is not magnetic.

than one fish at a time to end up with a basket full of fish of different sizes, shapes and colours.

Before you make the fish, try to look at some real ones, perhaps by visiting a fish stockist or a local garden centre where fish are displayed in tanks, or consult a book with illustrations. This will give you ideas for different shapes and colours. It is fun to decorate your fish with shiny stitching or sequins, to match the shining and sparkling of live fish in the water.

PLAYTIME

Make more than one rod so your toddler can fish with friends. Her imagination will be stretched as she and her friends make boats from upturned tables, surrounded by a sea of blue cloths with fish swimming all around. Hang baskets from cords stretched between the table legs for your toddler to slide from one end of the boat to the other as she sorts the fish. She may throw some fish back into the sea, ready to be caught again. This game will extend further as your child grows older and she begins to use her imagination to sail to far-off lands, bringing her catch back to the shore and selling it to the local shop, which can be set up in another part of the room. Perhaps she will meet some pirates on the way. This game has infinite possibilities and provides many wonderful ways for children to interact with each other.



'The most effective kind of education is that a child should play amongst lovely things.'

Plato

Making a fishing set

This game takes considerable skill, so is recommended for children of three years and over. Smaller children may find it difficult to master, which could end in tears of frustration.

You will need

Pencil

Strong felt

Sharp scissors

Sequins

Sewing needle

Sewing thread

Embroidery needle

Embroidery thread

Carded, unspun
sheep's wool*

1.5 cm (5/8 in) diameter
steel washers

Thin seasoned branches
or 1 cm (1/2 in)
diameter dowelling

Saw

Sandpaper

Craft knife

Cord for hanging

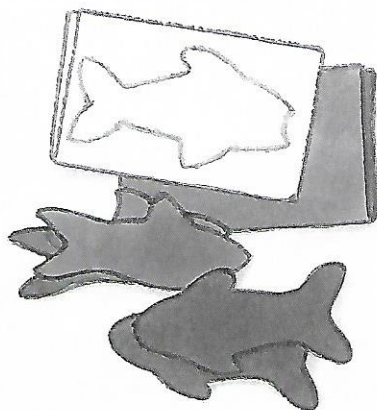
PVA glue

3 cm (1 1/4 in) diameter
magnetic washers

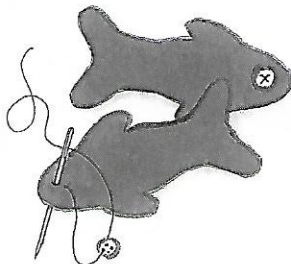
*Tease unspun sheep's wool before use, pulling gently to separate dense fibres. A comb-like hand 'carder' speeds up the process.

How to do it

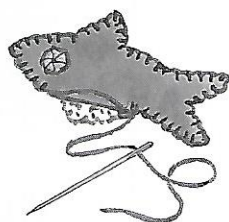
1 Draw a design for your fish on folded felt and cut out to give you two identical shapes. Vary the size and shape of your fish as you make more.



2 Sew on sequins or buttons as eyes and embroider other decorations, then stitch together each pair using blanket stitch (see page 28). Leave a small opening for stuffing.

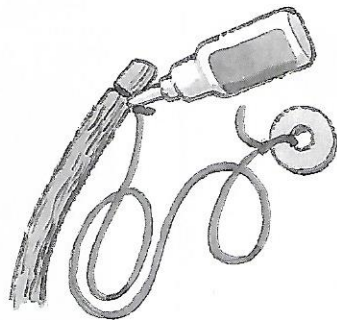


3 Stuff softly with unspun sheep's wool, then sew the hole closed. Sew a steel washer firmly to the mouth area.



4 To make each rod, use a thin seasoned branch about 33 cm (13 in) long or trim a length of dowelling to size. Sand the ends of the branch or length of dowelling well.

5 Use a craft knife to score each branch or length of dowelling about 3 cm (1 1/4 in) in from one end. Tie a length of cord around the notch and glue in place to stop it slipping off.



6 Tie a magnetic washer tightly to the loose end of the cord.

