

BIG BEGINNING:

Introducing Worms by Doing the Hokey Pokey

FOCUS AREAS

Science: studying characteristics of organisms

Gross Motor: wriggling and squirming like a worm

MATERIALS

Diary of a Worm by Doreen Cronin (optional)

Cardboard boxes large enough for children to wiggle through or a large sheet and low table or chairs to construct a tunnel

2 clear containers

2 real worms, each in a clear container

2 sheets of chart paper

Marker

2 hand stamps any shape

2 ink pads

PREPARATION

- Before group time, set up a tunnel of boxes in front of the area where you hold your gathering or make a tunnel by covering a low table and chairs with a sheet.
- Label one sheet of chart paper "What We Know About Worms" and the other sheet "What We Want to Learn About Worms."

WHAT TO DO

1. When you call the children for group time, invite them to pretend they are worms by wiggling through the tunnel. When all the children have squirmed and wiggled their way into the group area, tell them they are going to learn about worms.
2. Show the children the real worm in a clear plastic container. (If you and another adult each go around the circle in opposite directions, the children's waiting time is cut in half.)
3. Ask the children what they know about worms. Record the children's responses including the name of child after his response on the chart paper labeled "What We Know About Worms." Ask what they would like to find out about worms. Record their responses and names on the chart paper labeled "What We Want to Learn About Worms."
4. Tell the children they are going to compare being a person with being a worm. Stamp every child's right hand with a stamp. (Two adults going around the circle in opposite directions will cut waiting time.)
5. Do "The Hokey Pokey" slowly, taking time to make sure the children are using their right hand. Start by saying, "Show me your right hand, the one with the stamp." When it's time to put your left hand in say, "Do you know which hand is your left? It's the one that doesn't have a stamp, the one that's left."
6. Do the right and left foot slowly, reviewing how the right foot is on the same side as the right hand, the left foot is the one that's left. Continue with head and whole self.
7. Now talk about worms. "Do worms have a right hand or a left hand? Right foot or left foot?" Do "The Worm Hokey Pokey," an activity inspired by Doreen Cronin's book *Diary of a Worm*. Ask what worms can use to dance "The Hokey Pokey" (head, tail, whole self). Invite the children to pretend they are worms, placing their arms tight by their sides and their legs close together. If you like, you can all get down on the ground and put your heads together.
8. Remember not to clap after the last line of the song. If someone forgets, smile and ask, "Would worms be able to clap?"
9. Tell the children, "Now it's time to crawl out through the tunnel so we can learn more about worms."

A Note from the Author: The activities in this chapter are designed to build on each other. However, please feel free to choose those that meet the interests and abilities of your class. If parts of an activity seem like too much to do on a particular day, save them for a later time. Every class is different, even from day to day, and the activities are adaptable to meet the needs of your class.

BIG QUESTIONS FOR GROWING MINDS

Use the following questions to engage the children in a discussion about worms during group time or with an individual child during activity time:

- What does a worm look like?
- What would it be like to have a body without arms and legs?
- What would it be like to live in the ground?
- How do you think worms eat?

WORDS FOR BIG THINKING

Look for these words highlighted in italics throughout the activities in this chapter. Write the words out in large letters and introduce them a few at a time with the “Say, Clap, Act out, Do again” (SCAD) system. Using the words during activities and discussions will reinforce their meaning.

- Castings—worm waste
- Clitellum—the thick part of a worm’s body that creates the egg sacks
- Experiment—test to find out something
- Fertilizer—something that improves the soil to help plants grow better
- Prediction—like a guess, what you think might happen based on what you already know
- Scientist—person who studies the natural world
- Segment—part of a body
- Tunnel—long passageway dug underground
- Wormlet—tiny worm



PHOTO TIP

You can record the children’s explorations of worms by creating photo boards about hunting for worms, observing worms move, and making a giant worm. Look for close-ups of individual children and group shots that show children interacting. Also note vocabulary words and quotes from children to document the learning. Review the photo boards with the children as part of your assessment process.

