

INSIDE THE BIG TOP

Ringmaster Barkley beckons everyone to come inside the Big Top and have some fun with activities covering all the areas of learning and development!



How to use the poster

Stimulate child-initiated ideas by displaying the poster in the creative area, alongside a small world tent, or beside an indoor role play Big Top.

Alternatively, display the poster outdoors on the outside of a tent and provide children with dressing-up clothes, props and small apparatus to support them in putting on their own circus performances.

Activities to support the Early Years Foundation Stage

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Explore the poster and engage the children in recollection of circus performances they have watched. Discuss other forms of live entertainment they have enjoyed, for example, at the theatre, in the street or at a party. What did they enjoy most? Was there anything they did not like?
- Explore the word 'perform' and query why we watch circuses and other performances. Introduce the words 'entertain' and 'entertainment' and discuss how the performers on the poster plan to entertain their audience. Ask the children to take turns to entertain each other with a short performance (alone or with a partner), for example, singing a song, telling a joke or doing a balancing trick.

Literacy

Communication and Language

- Ask the children to read the words 'WELCOME TO THE BIG TOP' on the poster with you and establish who is being welcomed. Discuss the meaning of 'welcome' and make welcome signs to hang around your setting, for example, 'Welcome to the book corner/small world area'.
- Identify Ringmaster Barkley on the poster and ask children who they think he is talking to? Introduce a 'speech bubble' card and invite the children to dictate a suitable caption for Barkley to say. You could help younger children by modelling a ringmaster's call, 'Roll up, roll up to the Big Top fun!' and then write this in the speech bubble.

Mathematics

- Count the number of characters in the poster together and then count the hamsters, dogs, rabbits and cats separately. Invite children to stand in groups representing the different characters. Count them all: *Does the figure match the original total counted from the poster? Pose counting problems, for example, How many rabbits and cats all together? Are there more hamsters or more rabbits?*
- Ask the children questions about the poster to encourage understanding and use of positional language, for example, *Who is in the middle of the poster? Where is Ringmaster Barkley standing? Where is the cat on the unicycle?*

Understanding the World

- Look at the image of the cat on the unicycle. Ask children to think of similarities and differences between this unicycle and a bicycle and tricycle. Discuss how the cat will steer the unicycle. Explore the pedals on the image and on children's bicycles and tricycles. Explain how some have a chain while others have pedals fixed to the front wheel that turn with it: *Which of these does the unicycle have?*
- Discuss the meaning of the words 'Big Top' on the poster and ask children about their experience of different types of tents. Find images in catalogues and search engines. Discuss similarities and differences and their link to use, for example, colour (camouflage), shape (pop-up) and size (big top).

Physical Development

- Talk about how the poster performers are juggling and balancing books in their acts. Invite children to think about items that would be more suitable for this activity. Try using balls, bean bags, and sponges and ask them to decide which object is the easiest to juggle with.
- Discuss the circus performers on the poster and ask children which one of these they would most like to be. Suggest they mime their choice while others try to guess which one it is.

Expressive Arts and Design

- Provide props to define the acts, such as a ringmaster's hat, clowns' bow ties and frilled ruffs, feathers for the performing cat and pull-on shorts for the trapeze artists. Invite children to choose props and put on a group performance.
- Refer to the poster as you ask the children to help create a mini-big top from a cardboard box with a card cone taped to the top. Cut out some wide doors, folded back or pulled back in a curtain-style, and paint the finished product with stripes. Tie a mini-trapeze made from string and sticks to the ceiling and stretch string tightropes from wall to wall. Provide small world people and props and put on a miniature circus performance.

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