

LIFE CYCLES

Invite children to focus on the various changes that occur in each life cycle, as depicted in our poster, to find out how living things develop as they grow



How to use the poster

Display the whole poster in creative and investigative areas to inspire child-initiated activities linked to growth and change.

Use the top strip of poster images alongside photographs that the children have brought in of themselves, showing them since they were born, to encourage discussion about developmental milestones, such as crawling and riding a bike. Explore the middle strip of images when thinking about the stages in the life cycle of a butterfly and include them in a life cycle display. Label and then display the bottom strip of images next to an indoor growing table, or laminate them to display in a garden area to use for reference when discussing the growth of plants.

Activities to support the Early Years Foundation Stage

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Discuss how the newborn baby in the poster changes as they grow, before blowing the candles out at a fifth birthday party. Talk about babies and toddlers in the children's families and identify the nearest poster image to their stage of development, referring to family photographs if possible.
- Talk about how all of the poster images depict living things, and discuss important ways in which we can protect and care for them, for example, by keeping babies safe from danger, leaving developing wildlife undisturbed in the natural habitat and watering our growing plants.

Communication, Language and Literacy

- Extend children's vocabulary during discussions about the poster and generally regarding growth by introducing them to terms such as 'newborn', 'crawling' and 'toddling'; 'egg', 'larva', 'pupa', 'adult'; 'root', 'shoot', 'stem', 'leaf', 'flower', 'fruit'. Create word cards and ask children to place these on the appropriate images.
- Make up simple sequence stories together (consisting of around five sentences) entitled, for example, 'Now I am 5', 'The little egg', 'My strawberry plant'. Cut out and illustrate each story sentence with small drawings. Leave these alongside the relevant poster strips for children to read and arrange in sequence.

Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy

- Download and print the online-only individual cards featuring the poster images to use in sequencing activities, either by putting them on top of the poster images or by using them independently and then referring to the poster as a self-checking device.
- Draw attention to the arrows that are used to join the images in sequence and ask if the children know why they are there. Take turns to follow the arrows on each strip of images with a finger. Ask relevant questions involving vocabulary related to order, for example: *Which picture comes before the caterpillar/after the newborn baby?*, *Which is the first/last picture in this sequence?*

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

- Referring to the poster images, discuss the four stages in the life cycle of a Monarch butterfly, using the correct vocabulary.
- Explore the poster images of a strawberry plant as it develops from flower to fruit, through to the fruit's last image, as part of a dessert ready for eating. Create some labels for the parts of the strawberry plant and invite children to put these in the correct place on a laminated version of the poster. Grow strawberry plants of your own in a bucket, with the poster strip displayed alongside. As they develop compare the growing plants to the equivalent stage in the strip of images, asking children to think: *What stage will happen next?*

Physical Development

- Explore the poster images of the child. Hold up the online cards, or point to the poster images, in sequence and ask the children to mimic the movement of the child as they grow. Talk about the things a five year old can do and have fun hopping, skipping, jumping and so on.
- Follow the life cycle of a butterfly through the poster images and then represent these stages through body movements: curling in a tight ball (egg), crawling (caterpillar), spinning round and round (forming a chrysalis) standing still and straight with arms tightly wrapped round the body (pupa) and then gradually opening out and flying away (butterfly).

Creative Development

- Look at the last image in each poster strip – the happy child, the beautiful butterfly, the tasty strawberry dessert. Represent these creatively by organising a role play birthday party for everyone to join in with, creating a large painted butterfly as a group and trying a strawberry recipe together.
- Discuss the symmetrical patterns on the butterfly wings, the caterpillars' bodies and the seed-studded strawberries. Represent these creatively with print and collage techniques.

Jean Evans is an Early Years consultant and author