

Overview

In this activity, children can identify and sequence events from a familiar story or song, which will help them learn that the order of events is important. This is a first step in understanding what **algorithms** are.

Concepts:



Algorithms

Age group: 4 – 6

Duration: 15 – 45 minutes

Materials you will need:

The following are provided to download and print out should you wish:

- Old lady and animals
- Correct animal sequence
- Animals sheet
- Words of the song

You may like to use farm animals, toys, drawn pictures etc if that is easier.

What will your child/children learn?

Algorithms – An algorithm is a precise sequence of instructions, or set of rules, for performing a task.

There are many opportunities in everyday life that need a sequence of instructions such as cleaning your teeth, getting dressed or making a sandwich. See how many you and your child can find.

Algorithm is a computational term used in the Computing Curriculum in schools.

The behaviours **creating**, **persevering**, **collaborating** and **tinkering** (changing things to see what happens), are approaches to learning that are encouraged throughout our home activities.

Getting started

- 1)** Read a familiar story or sing a song that contains a clear sequence, or order of objects or characters. For this activity we are using 'There was an old lady who swallowed a fly'
- 2)** Either print out the animal cards, or get your child to draw their own, or use toy animals to represent those in the song. Spread out the animals on the floor. Ask: Can your child identify each one?
- 3)** Place a hoop on the floor, or draw a circle on a large piece of paper with a label saying 'in the song' inside. Place all of the animals around the outside of the circle. Sing the song together.
- 4)** Ask: your child to listen as each of the animals are mentioned. When they hear any mentioned then they can put them in the circle. if you have more than one child they can take it in turns.

Their turn

- 1)** Make number cards 1-7 and lay out on the floor. Sing the song together again. Ask: your child to help you move the animals to each number in order. For example, the first creature in the song was a fly so your child should place the fly next to the number 1.
- 2)** Put the animals back in a random order. Sing the song again, stopping before each new animal is mentioned. Can your child guess (predict) which one comes next and place it next to the right number?
- 3)** Ask: your child to close their eyes while you remove one of the animals. Can they work out which one is missing? Where does it appear in the sequence? Repeat again, possibly removing more than one animal at a time.

Time to talk

- 1)** Did they manage to sequence all the animals in the right order?
- 2)** Was the order important to retelling the story?
- 3)** What would happen if the old lady swallowed the horse first?

Explain: that the order of the sequence is important and that it would be a different story if the sequence changed.

More ideas

- Identify key events in a story and write them down. Use key words such as **first, then, after** to link the events together. Eg **First** the old lady swallowed a fly, **then** she swallowed a
- Try thinking of other story or rhyme examples that you could use (on another day perhaps!) such as the 3 Billy Goats Gruff, The Very Hungry Caterpillar etc