

The Yes/No Sort



1-4 players

Ages 3+

5-10 minutes

Materials: Any collection of items that can be sorted into yes/no piles according to one specific attribute (a particular type, size, shape, color, texture, etc.)

Examples of collections:

Nature items



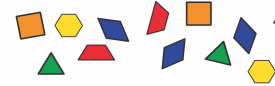
Clothing items



Kitchen items



Pattern block shapes



GOAL of the game:

To sort a collection of items into two sets (yes/no) according to one sorting attribute

VOCABULARY words:

compare
same
different

QUESTION prompts:

Can you explain the sorting rule to me?
What is another sorting rule we could use?

Setup:

1. Choose a collection of items and place them in a pile on the table or floor
2. Choose an attribute for children to sort the collection into yes/no piles by.

Examples:

- Nature items: brown items, soft items (e.g., flower petal)
- Clothing: blue items, small items (children's clothing), sandals
- Kitchen: spoons, raisins (from a fruit or trail mix)
- Shapes: triangles, shapes with four sides

Play:

Show children the collection of items. For example, show a laundry basket with clothes inside. Say, “Let’s sort these clothes into two piles. In one pile, put all of the clothing that is blue. In another pile, put all of the clothing that is not blue.”

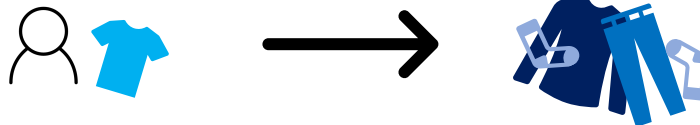


Hold up a piece of clothing from the basket. Ask, “Is this blue?”



Once the child responds correctly, ask, “Which pile should we put it in? The blue pile or the other colors pile?”

Let the child add the piece of clothing to the correct pile.



Have children continue to sort the clothes into the piles of blue and non-blue. Allow them to make reasonable sorting decisions as they go. For example, if a shirt has blue and yellow stripes, ask children which pile they think the shirt belongs to (e.g., “it goes in the blue pile because everything that has some blue on it will go in the blue pile”).

Once children have finished sorting, ask comparison questions:

“Which pile looks bigger, the blue pile or the other colors pile?”

“The blue pile is bigger. What do you think that means? Do we wear a lot of blue clothing?”

“How many pieces of clothing do you think are in the blue pile? Can you count and see if you are right?”

To extend this activity, put the clothing items back into the basket and choose a new attribute for children to sort the collection into yes/no piles by. For example: “Let’s sort the clothes into two piles again. This time, let’s put all of the kids’ clothes in one pile and the grown-up clothes in another pile.”

What children are learning:

- This game helps children learn that a whole set can be sorted into two smaller sets based on one sorting attribute rule.
- Young children’s verbal skills vary. Some will be able to verbalize their answers to comparison questions more easily than others. Allow emergent language children to respond by pointing to piles or showing numbers with their fingers.

The Mystery Rule



2-4 players

Ages 5+

10-15 minutes

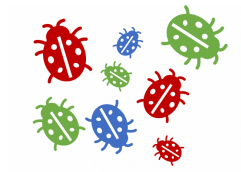
Materials:

Any collection of items that can be sorted by different attributes (e.g., by type, size, shape, color, or texture). Examples of collections:

Nature items



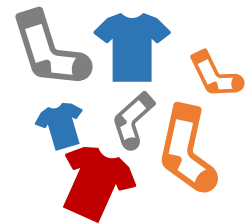
Counter sets



Pattern block cutouts



Clothing items



GOAL of the game:

Children determine the common attribute among a set of items

VOCABULARY words:

same (in common)
different
sorting rule

QUESTION prompts:

How did you figure out what the sorting rule was?
What did you look at?
What did you think about?

Setup:

Choose a collection of items. Then, choose an attribute (sorting rule) and set aside the items that have that attribute. Make sure the remaining items don't share the attribute.

Examples from the collections listed above:

Sorting rule:

leaves



Sorting rule:

large



Sorting rule:

4 sides



Sorting rule:

orange



Play:

Show children the set of items that you set aside.



Make sure they can also see the remaining pile of items.



Say, “I used a mystery sorting rule to sort these items from the rest of the pile. Can you look at the items and tell me what my sorting rule was? What do all of these items have in common? What is the same about these items?”

Some children may be able to tell what the sorting rule is right away (“You took out all the orange”). Say, “Yes, I made a group of all the orange laundry!”

Others will need your help. Ask questions to direct children’s attention to the sorting rule.

“Are these items the same size or different sizes?”

“Are they the same color?”

“Are these all the same type of laundry item?”

Once children have identified the sorting rule, add the items back into the larger pile. Choose a new attribute (sorting rule) and set aside the items that have that attribute.

Once children are ready, have them take turns choosing their own mystery sorting rule for others to solve!

What children are learning:

- This game helps children learn to sort items according to *one* sorting attribute. In the example above, children must focus on *one* attribute – the orange color – in order to solve the mystery rule.
- To solve the mystery sorting rule, children need to ignore the differences between the items in the set (e.g., that the orange laundry includes different clothing items) in order to determine what the items have in common (they are all orange). This helps children develop both their sorting skills and their attention shifting skills.