

Dive into an underwater world full of fascinating creatures. The Ocean Scenery Stones are a tactile and open-ended addition to aquatic small worlds and loose parts play. Their shapes and patterns promote creativity, language and pattern making.

Loose parts

Offer the Scenery Stones alongside other loose parts, to boost children’s critical thinking and creativity. Using loose parts to create patterns and stacks, investigate different textures and invent stories builds on several areas of learning, including maths, literacy, understanding of the world and fine motor skills.

For an ocean-themed loose parts collection, in addition to the Scenery Stones, you could offer these loose parts in a white or blue tray or on fabric:

- White/blue felt shapes or white/blue wool pieces
- Small mirrors
- Shells, stones
- Blue/clear glass beads
- Buttons, beads or other objects in white/blue
- Seaweed – real or strips of dark green crepe paper/tissue paper/green fabric
- Artificial coral – or make your own using pipe cleaners or tissue paper



Aquatic art

The stones also offer simple and open-ended ways to get creative and develop fine motor skills:

- Use the stones and natural materials to create ocean-themed pictures or patterns – indoors or outside.
- Press the stones into dough to leave an imprint. What does the imprint feel like? You could also make patterns with imprints. You might like to use the stones alongside the Let’s Roll Ocean Life rollers.
- Use wax crayons and paper to make rubbings of the stones. Learning how much pressure to apply is great for fine motor skills.

Small world ocean play

The Scenery Stones offer an open-ended way to enhance small world play, inspiring children’s imagination and enhancing their language development. Use these ideas to create an underwater landscape inside or outdoors:

Watery world

An underwater world created using sensory materials will make small world play even more inviting.

- Using real water makes small world ocean scene sensory and great fun to play with. You might like to add blue food colouring.
- For a less splashy sea, try blue biodegradable sensory goo or bubble foam (made by whisking two parts water to one part sensitive bubble bath using a handheld mixer until it forms stiff peaks).
- Alternatively, you could create a floor for an ocean small world scene using blue fabric/felt, a large mirror or blue play dough, or use sand as the ocean floor.



Aquatic accessories

Position the wave and shell stones standing upright to create hiding places for shy marine creatures. (You could sink the stones into play dough to help them stay upright.)

Add to your ocean scene using:

- Blue/clear glass beads, stones and shells
- Seaweed (real or homemade)
- Artificial coral (or make your own)
- Succulent plants (real or artificial)
- Underwater cave – you could use Yellow Door’s Cave or make your own
- Let’s Investigate Seashore stones



Creatures of the deep

- Add sea figures, such as Little Lands: Ocean.
- You might choose to focus on just one or two types of animals, such as dolphins, fish or crabs.
- Add familiar characters from a book set in the sea for small world bookish play. These could be animal figures or printed out illustrations from a book such as *The Snail and the Whale*. Leave the book alongside for children to interact with too.



Books about oceans

The Snail and the Whale by Julia Donaldson

Little Turtle and the Sea by Becky Davies

Tropical Terry by Jarvis

The Big Book of the Blue by Yuval Zommer

More to explore



The stones provide opportunities for developing mathematical thinking, such as counting and spatial reasoning:

- Talk about the different shapes and sizes of the Scenery Stones. Children might enjoy laying them out and counting them, or sorting them into the three sets of six.
 - Make imprints in play dough using the different stones. Stamp the stones in different orientations using both the smooth and patterned sides. Then ask the children to match the stones to the imprints. They will develop important spatial reasoning skills as they learn to turn and flip the stones to make them match the imprints.
- Use the stones to create repeating patterns – either flat on a surface, or in a stack. Talk about the pattern the child makes – is it shell, wave, coral, shell, wave, coral (ABC pattern) or something else?
 - Create patterns with reflectional and rotational symmetry. Children might also create patterns that radiate out from the centre.
 - Encourage positional language – maybe the shell stone is between two green coral stones, or perhaps the dolphin is on a blue wave stone.

Get talking – useful words

Ocean, sea, underwater, waves, currents, fish, shell, coral, seaweed.