



# Creative Ways to Use Large Activity Trays

## Chinese New Year

Create a Chinese New Year sensory tray for children to explore together. You could add red and gold tinsel and bead strings, red money envelopes, red and yellow pom-poms, small lanterns, gold coins and dyed red rice. Place cardboard tubes, tongs, measuring spoons, funnels and bowls for children to use for scooping, pouring, filling, posting and sorting.



Create the Chinese New Year zodiac story by creating a river in shallow foil trays across your large activity tray. On either side of the trays, place stones, sticks, log slices, green material for the river bank and add small world animal characters. Use these [Chinese New Year Story Cards](#) to encourage the children to talk about the story and develop storylines during their play.

Using chalk, draw the outline of the animal represented for the current year being celebrated. Place a range of loose parts including gold, red and yellow objects and other items, such as cotton reels, log slices, pine cones and pom-poms. Add tweezers, tongs and spoons to the tray for children to use to pick up the different items and fill inside the shape.

Place balls of clay into your large activity tray for children to manipulate into the shape of a dragon. Add googly eyes and various red, gold and yellow objects for children to use to add to their dragon including lolly sticks, pipe cleaners, gold cake cases and pom-poms. Add a selection of tools, such as rolling pins, rollers, plastic clay knives and scissors to support them as they sculpt and mould.



Spray foam onto the base of your large activity tray and add drops of red and yellow food colouring on top. Place these [Pattern Cards](#) and a range of tools to hold and explore as the children create patterns, marks and draw freely in the foam. You may like to include small world dragon characters, bead strings, brushes, paint scrapers, chopsticks and forks. As the children move the foam and make marks, the colours will combine to make a beautiful marbled effect. In addition, you could support children with noticing the first letter of their name as you explore marks alongside them.



Many people celebrate Chinese New Year with fireworks. Snip the ends of cardboard tubes and bend the ends outwards to resemble a firework pattern. Line the tray with black paper and provide the children with shallow trays of brightly-coloured paint. Children can print onto the black paper to create a firework filled night sky.

As many people clean their home before Chinese New Year to remove any bad luck, you could create a cleaning station at your activity tray. Place the tray outside and fill with soapy water, sponges and cloths for children to wash and clean outside furniture, toys and fences. Around the tray, place some brooms and brushes for children to sweep.

Add a range of musical instruments and this [Photo Pack](#) for children to talk about and explore. Encourage children to experiment with different ways of playing the instruments to create dragon and lion sounds. You may wish to add red and yellow scarves or streamers to support moving rhythmically to the sounds. Explore making loud and quiet sounds together.