# TACTILE ANIMALS
Montessori

With these large two-sided, super-resistant tokens this educational device – inspired by the method of the educator Maria Montessori – enables very young children to become acquainted with five lovable animals and several of their characteristics, thus stimulating the gesture, touch and perception of the shapes and the sense of space. This multi-sensory approach favours more thorough learning, which is very important for cognitive development at a pre-school age.
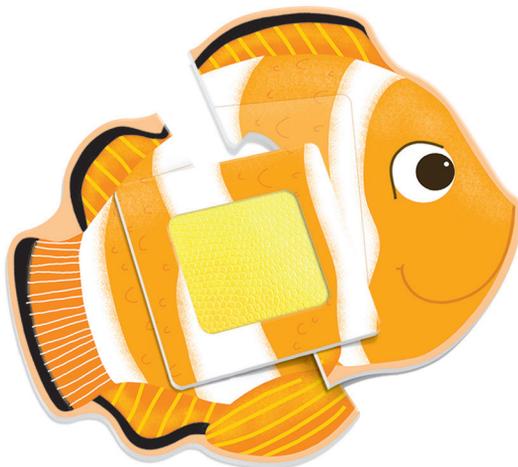
THE PUZZLES

To make the game easier and to facilitate recognition of the individual subjects, it is preferable to begin the activity by having just one puzzle assembled at a time. Children can assemble the images completely on their own, thanks to the self-correcting inserts. The parent or the teacher must confine him/herself to providing several simple suggestions, and must not take the place of the children in realising the individual actions. Only later, in fact, can we position all the tokens on the game board.
In any case, we always stimulate the children by having the tokens be compared with the images shown on the back of the box, and by attracting their attention to the details of each individual design from the very beginning. Every time that the child assembles a puzzle, we pronounce their name while pointing at the subject: "This is a sheep", "This is a dog", "This is a fish", "This is a tortoise", and so forth, in such a way as to reinforce the association of the subject with the name that represents it.

THE TACTILE TOKENS:
LEXICAL AND LOGICAL THINKING

Once the animals are assembled, we point out the colours and the details of each one. We then introduce the tokens that have a tactile surface, and say to the children: "This is the lamb's wool", "This is the dog's hair", "These are the scales of the fish", "This is the tortoise's shell", "This is the zebra's coat", "This is the elephant's hide".

We reinforce the learning by having them take the five tactile tokens and have them position these over the corresponding animals. We then touch the tactile surface of each token, every time pronouncing a sentence that describes the main characteristic. For example, "Touch the sheep's wool: it is soft", "Touch the fish's scales: they are hard", "Touch the elephant's hide; it is rough", and so forth and so on. We remember to pronounce with greater emphasis all the new words that we want to teach to the children (wool, fur, coat, scales, hide, shell), and we force ourselves to attract their attention to adjectives with the opposite meaning: "soft" as opposed to "hard", or "smooth" as opposed to "rough" .

At this point we can ask the children to recognise automatically the coat of each animal and their relative characteristics. For example, we ask them "Who does the wool belong to!" or "Who do the scales belong to?" Or else, have the children play by introducing two animals at a time with the token already in position. For example, the sheep and the fish, or the dog and the elephant, and ask "Who has the softer coat?", "Who has the harder one?", "Who has the smoother coat?", "Who has the tougher skin?"

TOUCH AND SMELL BINGO!

Lastly, we can play a very delightful sensory game of Bingo. We give each child an animal to assemble.
After all the puzzles of the animals have been assembled, we put all the tactile tokens in the small bag. At this point, the children in turn must recognise the touch token that corresponds to their own animal, by touching it. The winner is the child who first recognises it and positions it in the corresponding space!