Talking Boxes

Farm Animals
Farm Animals Talking Box

Equipment needed:

Toy farm animals to put in the box:
- Cow
- Pig
- Sheep
- Horse
- Dog
- Donkey
- Calf
- Piglet
- Lamb
- Foal
- Chicken

Additional equipment:
- Field (piece of green paper/fencing)
- Barn (made out of cardboard box/from farm set)
- Feely bag
- Optional: Velcro board: pictures of Old Macdonald, a barn, a tractor, a tree, and farm animals (you could use real objects instead, without the Velcro board).
- 5 small plastic ducks and a mummy duck (for song)
Farm Animals Talking Box

Target: Attention & Listening

Equipment needed: grown-up animals (in the box)

Who’s talking?

*You could use this as the introduction to the box. Take the lid off the box (keeping the contents hidden from the children). Make it enticing, “I wonder what’s in here? What could it be? I can hear something talking. Let’s listen!” (Put your hand to your ear to show the children that you’re listening). Make the noise of one of the animals e.g. “Moo”. Ask the children, “Who’s talking?”*

Help tips:

- If they don’t answer immediately, make the animal sound again. “Listen, again”.
- If they still are unable to guess correctly give them a choice of what it could be e.g. “Is it a cow or a pig?”

When you’ve identified what animal is talking, take that animal out of the box. Continue making the sounds of the animals until you have identified all of the animals in the box.

Extending the activity:

Leave all the animals in the centre of the group. Allow the children to take turns making an animal sound for the other children to guess. Each time they guess correctly place the animal back in the box.
Farm Animals Talking Box

Target: Understanding language

You need to know how much the children in your setting understand. You can use these activities to work out how many key words the children understand if you are not sure.

1 key word: Let’s hide!

Equipment needed: animals (in the box)

Take the animals out of the box one at a time. Talk about what each animal is called. You could start this activity with “Who’s Talking?” to tune in the children’s listening.

Place the animals around the room (so that they are still visible). Make it into a hiding game: “All of the animals are hiding from us. I need you to go and find them for me. Jo (gain the child’s attention first by calling their name) can you go and find the cow”.

Help tips:

- Repetition of instructions: “Find the cow. Where’s the cow?” (emphasising the key word- underlined).
- Using pointing to show the child which direction to go in.
- Asking another child to go with them to help.
Farm Animals Talking Box

Target: Understanding language

2 key words: Where do I live?

Equipment: field, barn (see below for further information), grown-up animals in the box (if you want to use baby animals too then make sure the children are familiar with this vocabulary first)

Help the children to make a field for animals to live in. You could get a large piece of paper and colour it in green or stick green tissue paper on it (or even go outside and get some grass!) or if you have fence pieces from a toy farm you could use them. All of the time, keep talking about how you are making a “field”. Talk about how animals live in fields. Have the children ever seen animals in a field? What animals have the children seen in a field? You could use photographs of animals in a field to show the children.

Then you need to make a barn. Again you could use a barn from a toy farm already available in your setting or you could make one out of a box. Emphasise to the children that you are making a “barn”. Talk about how the animals go in the barn when it’s cold/wet etc.

Once the field and barn are ready, start taking the animals out of the box. Talk about each animal and their name. Explain to the children that you are going to put them to live somewhere. Give each child a turn. Ask them things such as “Put the cow in the field” (see how the two words underlined are the keywords that the child needs
to understand in the instruction). Once they have done this, talk about what the cow is going to do e.g. “She wants to eat some grass”.

Help tips:

- Make sure the child is looking at you before giving the instruction.
- Repeat the instruction again if they do not respond.
- If they pick up the wrong animal or put it in the wrong place, encourage them to “listen again” and then repeat the instruction.
- If they are still unsure then break the instruction into 2 parts e.g. “Find the cow”. When they have found the cow then say, “Put it in the field”.
Farm Animals Talking Box

Target: Understanding language

3 key words/concept of big/little

Equipment: field, barn, grown-up and baby animals

Before you do this activity you can talk about the animals in the box, sorting them into big/little animals (for the grown-up and baby animals).

You can do the same as for the 2 word level activity but this time you can add the concept of big/little (for the grown-up and baby animals) e.g. Put the little cow in the field"

(key words underlined).

Ideas from Language Steps by Amanda Armstrong
Farm Animals Talking Box

Target: Talking (spoken language)

What’s in the bag?

**Equipment:** grown-up animals, feely/cloth bag
(You could use the baby animals too, and whisper the sound they make; see below for details of activity)

*Encourage all the children to close their eyes. Place one of the animals from the Talking Box in a cloth bag. The children can open their eyes again and as the children pass the bag round everyone sings:*

This is the way we pass the bag, pass the bag, pass the bag
This is the way we pass the bag, I wonder what’s inside?

(Sing to the tune: Here we go round the mulberry bush)

*When the song stops, the bag stops with that child. The child needs to take the animal out of the bag, and say what it is. All of the other children make the sound of the animal.*

*Then encourage the children to close their eyes and the adult swaps the animal in the bag for a new animal. Then sing again.*

**Help tips:**
Don’t force children to name what it is. If they are unsure, offer them a choice e.g. Is it a dog or a cow?
Farm Animals Talking Box

Target: Talking (spoken language)

It’s story-time!

Equipment: story books in your setting

Link the animals in the box with a story already available in your setting. Each time one of the animals is mentioned in the story then take the animal out of the box.

Making comments about what happened in the story (e.g. That was a big horse!) will encourage more language from the children than asking questions, but here are some ideas of questions you could ask about the story:

►These questions are easiest…
  • What is this?
  • Who is sleeping?
  • Where’s the cow?

►These questions are harder…
  • How did the horse feel?
  • What will happen next?

Why? questions are the hardest! (remember there could be lots of different answers)
(ref: Blank Language for Learning Model)
Farm Animals Talking Box

Target: Talking

Extending the activity:

Retell a favorite Farm Animals story: Once you know children are familiar with a story, then encourage them to retell the story to you. Let the children use the animals in the box to help tell the story.

Story strings:

Taking one animal at a time out of the box, encourage children to tell their own story. You could bring in other items from around your setting to link into the story or encourage children to go and find something.
(Idea from Nursery Narrative Pack)
Farm Animals Talking Box

Target: Talking (spoken language)

Equipment: Velcro/magnetic board. Pictures of Old Macdonald, a barn, a tractor, a tree, and farm animals (you could use real objects instead, without the Velcro board).

Place Old MacDonald on the board. Allow one of the children to choose between the barn, tractor and tree. Place the object they have chosen e.g. tree on the board next to Old MacDonald. Allow another child to choose one of the animals e.g. cow. Ask them, “Is the cow going under or in the tree?” (Show them with the pictures how this looks as you say it. This is meant to be funny!).

Then sing:

Old Macdonald had a tree
Ee i ee i o
And in that tree he had a cow ee i ee i o
With a moo, moo here etc

(Emphasise the words in bold, and point to the items as you sing the names of them e.g. point to the tree as you sing “tree”).

Equipment: grown-up and baby animals

Baby animals

Taking the animals out of the box, help the children to match the baby animals with their parent. Encourage the children to talk about what the animals look like to help them to match correctly. Introduce the vocabulary for the baby animals.
Farm Animals Talking Box

Target: Play & Imagination

Equipment: animals in the box

Let’s pretend!

Encourage one of the children to put their hand into the box and select one of the animals. Name the animal or encourage the children to name it e.g. “Cow”. Talk about what sound a cow makes. How do they move? (Or how many legs?). What do cows do? Encourage the children to pretend to be cows (moving around the room on all fours, mooing and pretending to eat grass). Continue with other animals from the box.

Help tips:
If the children are reluctant to join in then use the adults in the room to model or select the more confident children to take the lead.

Extending the activity:
Allow one of the children to pretend to be an animal out of the box for the other children to guess what animal they are.
Farm Animals Talking Box

Target: Speech and Sound Awareness
For older children

Let’s clap! (Syllable clapping)

Equipment: grown-up and baby animals (in the box)

Open the box. Take one of the animals out of the box. Encourage the children to name e.g. “Horse”. Show the children how you can clap the name e.g. “horse” (1 clap).

Extending the activity
1. Encourage the children to give the animal a name. Then clap the name.
2. Counting the number of claps (syllables) in a word: Some children will be able to count the number of claps immediately but other children will need some support. Use something visual for the children to see as you count e.g. bricks (use one brick for each syllable/clap). As the children become more confident then you can encourage them to take the bricks out as you say the word.

- Donkey: 2 syllables/claps
- Sheep: 1 syllable/clap
- Pig: 1 syllable/clap
- Dog: 1 syllable/clap
- Horse: 1 syllable/clap
- Cow: 1 syllable/clap
- Calf: 1 syllable/clap
- (Be aware of other versions that children may use e.g. “Piggy” (2 syllables/claps) or “Horsie” (2 syllables/claps).
Farm Animals Talking Box

Target: Speech and Sound Awareness
Rhyme  (For older children)

Equipment: grown-up and baby animals

Take the animals out the box one at a time, and start saying rhyming words for that animal name. You could make up silly sentences with the more able children incorporating these rhyming words. You can use words and non-words.

Some examples of rhyming words are shown below. Remember that words may be spelt differently but still rhyme!

- Sheep: beep, cheep, deep, heap, jeep, keep, leap, peep, reap, weep
- Pig: big, dig, fig, jig, wig
- Dog: bog, cog, fog, hog, jog, log,
- Cow: how, now, row, sow, wow

Remember regional accents change how you say the words!

Extending the activity:
Start up a rhyme box at pre-school of things that rhyme (objects are best but you can use some pictures too). Start with a simple everyday word/object (simple consonant-vowel-consonant words are best).

E.g. cat, hat, rat, mat, bat, sat
Farm Animals Talking Box

Let’s sing!

5 Little Ducks (you will need 5 plastic ducks and a mummy duck to use as props as you sing)

FIVE little ducks went swimming one day
Over the hill and far away.
Mother duck said QUACK QUACK QUACK QUACK QUACK
And only FOUR little ducks came back!

FOUR little ducks went swimming one day
Over the hill and far away.
Mother duck said QUACK QUACK QUACK QUACK QUACK
And only THREE little ducks came back!

THREE little ducks went swimming one day
Over the hill and far away.
Mother duck said QUACK QUACK QUACK QUACK QUACK
And only TWO little ducks came back!

TWO little ducks went swimming one day
Over the hill and far away.
Mother duck said QUACK QUACK QUACK QUACK QUACK
And only ONE little duck came back!

ONE little duck went swimming one day
Over the hill and far away.
Mother duck said QUACK QUACK QUACK QUACK QUACK
And all her FIVE little ducks came back!
Baa Baa Black Sheep

Baa, baa black sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full.
One for the Master,
And one for the Dame,
And one for the little boy who lives down the lane.

Old MacDonald
(you could use the Velcro board if you wanted to)

**Equipment:** feely bag

*Place animals from the box into a feely bag. Find a picture or draw a picture of old MacDonald and make him a farm e.g. some fences for fields and a building for barn. Take an animal out of the box e.g. cow. “Look, Old MacDonald has a cow! What sound does the cow make? Moo!” Then sing…. “Old MacDonald had a farm ee i ee i o, And on that farm he had a cow etc…”*

You could whisper the sounds for the baby animals!

**Remember: sing slowly so the children can hear the words!**