

**SPARK**

# Creating a Spark with *Professional Crocodile*



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 **BookTrust**  
Inspire a love of reading

# Introduction

Spark aims to **inspire a love of stories and books** in children and young people with additional needs.

Spark includes two books, two accompanying resources and an introductory letter. The resources provide advice and ideas for engaging students in reading for pleasure by creating meaningful sensory experiences that bring books to life.

This resource uses ***Professional Crocodile* by Giovanna Zoboli and Mariachiara Di Giorgio** as a springboard for a diverse range of activities.

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## About *Professional Crocodile*

This picture book was selected by a panel of specialists, based on its simplicity, style and humour.



*Professional Crocodile* is a wordless graphic-style book offering a quirky account of a crocodile's daily life. The reader follows the crocodile on his morning routine and then as he leaves the house and sets off on the journey to work – at the zoo.

### Key themes

- Routines
- Empathy
- Humour
- Animals and animal welfare
- Surprises and unexpected events

# Things you may need

These are the key items you need for the activities – though of course you may want to use different items to adapt the activities for your students.

## For the sensory project: a hoop world

- A large hula hoop, or several coat-hangers
- Strips of paper, coloured cellophane or similar
- Paint
- Sellotape
- String

### Optional:

- Objects linked to the story that students can explore. Choose items of sensory interest, like flowers with interesting textures or alarm clocks with different sounds.

## For the other activities

- A variety of paper, card, old newspapers and other stationery
- Pencils and paints
- A large black-out curtain or sheet
- Sources of noise such as alarm clocks, mobile phones, a computer
- Items used to make watery sounds
- Toothbrushes, towels and facecloths
- A fan
- Neck ties and hats
- Items for making toast and jam
- Items that make traffic-related sounds
- Bicycle helmets
- A water spray bottle
- Rubber tyres or other rubbery material
- Flowers
- Coins
- Foods such as bread, fruit and vegetables
- Balloons
- Tennis rackets and a ball

# Using *Professional Crocodile*

## Working with your students

We know that every school, every class, and every student is different. We also appreciate that every practitioner has their own needs, priorities and time constraints, which is why we've made sure the Spark resources are flexible.

You will know how to engage your students with *Professional Crocodile*, which activities will work best for them and how to adapt them for your setting. However, the ideas in this resource can be used as a starting point for you to build upon.

Using fun, inspiring and varied ways to engage your students with *Professional Crocodile* will support them to become immersed in the story, and to experience the pleasure and joy of books.

## Approaching the book

When exploring books, some students may need support to help them draw on their background knowledge and experience, and to use this to deepen their enjoyment of the story.

Thinking about the **time** and **context** for introducing *Professional Crocodile* can help to support this. For example:

- Read the book just after a relevant experience – so just after the morning routine, a trip to the park or a journey on public transport.
- Set up an exploration activity before reading the story – playing with transport toys, baking bread and wrapping it in a paper bag, or gathering and wrapping flowers in a bouquet.

This book lends itself to being told as a sensory story. Try to condense the narrative into a few key points of sensory interest – too many may be confusing. Repeating a few key points, in a consistent way, will allow students to recognise the activities.



### Tip

Ensure that students who use alternative communication methods have their relevant tools to hand so they can ask questions about the story. Allow time for them to do so.

Model how to ask questions by thinking out loud about the story yourself, as you go along, perhaps through words, mime or doodles.

# Sensory project: a hoop world

This activity uses a hula hoop to create sensory stimulation and interaction, and can help ensure all students – including those who use wheelchairs or standing frames – are able to take part. It's a great craft activity too!

**Remember, the items you need are listed on page 3.**

## What to do

- 1 Suspend your hula hoop from the ceiling so that it hangs parallel with the floor.



### Tip

If you don't have a hula hoop, hang coat-hangers from the ceiling to form a square to give the same effect.

- 2 Paint or decorate long strips of paper to represent the buildings in the book.
- 3 Cut coloured cellophane to represent things in the pictures, like the traffic lights the crocodile walks past on his journey.
- 4 Add any further decorations – like flowers, or the birds in the park – using the book as inspiration.
- 5 Hang your creations from the hoop.
- 6 **Optional:** Hang objects relevant to various scenes for students to interact with.



### Tip

For some students, hang up a bell (or similar) for them to ring by bashing into it – their equivalent of pressing the bell on the tube or bus.

- 7 Encourage your students to stand or sit inside the hoop and become immersed in the story.

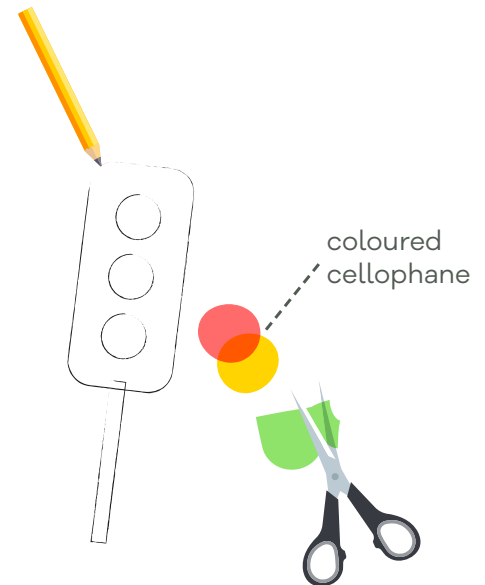
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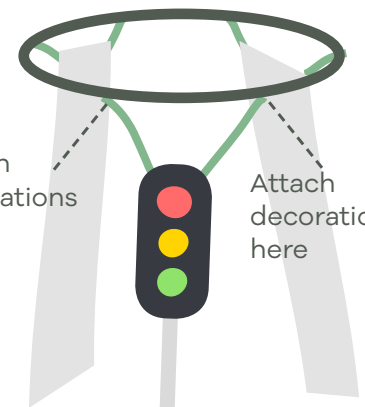
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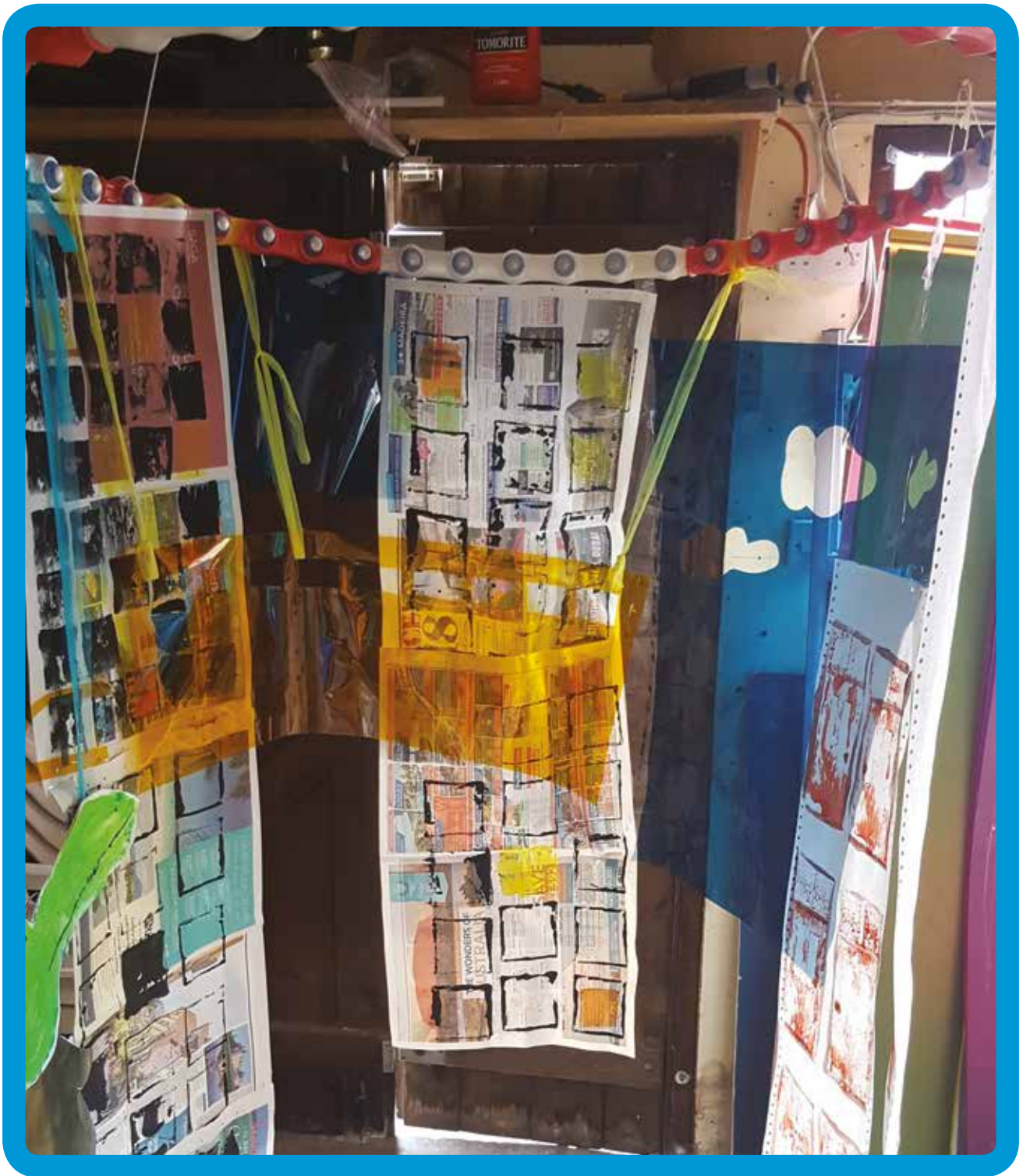
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A school's interpretation of the hoop world sensory project

## Other ideas

- Create story brollies by hanging up items relating to the book from the inside of an open umbrella for your students to interact with.
- Make a discovery tray using *Professional Crocodile* as the theme. Fill a plastic tray (or a series of trays) with items relevant to the book (or different sections of the book), for students to explore.

# Page-by-page ideas

You can use and adapt these ideas as you explore *Professional Crocodile* with your students, to support their involvement in the story.

## Waking up

- Darken the room and drape black fabric over students.
- Use alarm clocks and encourage students to switch the sounds on and off.
- Encourage students to make their own alarm clock noises to wake the crocodile.
- Using a pair of curtains on a pole, encourage everyone to open them.
- Model yawning and stretching actions and get students to join in.

## Getting ready

- Create swirling water and toilet flushing sounds.
- Use towels and facecloths to rub students' faces. Demonstrate brushing your teeth and get students to join in. Smile to show that your teeth have been brushed.
- Using card, make window frames that you can open and close, and make simple paper birds to fly past them.
- Use a fan to create a breeze and link this to the idea of opening a window.
- Gather a selection of different ties for students to choose from. Tie one around each person's neck or get students to help a friend.
- Let students choose from a selection of different hats.
- Make up and record your own radio jingles.
- Supply strawberry jam and marmalade to spread on toast.
- Make door-slamming noises.
- Challenge students to throw hats on to a peg, and encourage them to cheer for each other.



### Tip

Encourage students to try asking for a turn.

## Journey to work

- Play bus and car noises or use beep buttons for students to press.
- Put on bike helmets.
- Spray water as a car tyre goes past, to create the feeling of being splashed by water.
- Encourage students to feel the ridges in a car tyre, and make tyre track art.
- Play driving noises and get students to use seatbelts and steering wheels. Focus on the sounds made by the seatbelt.
- Ask students to huddle together, squashed, and to move around in a group as if they're at a busy station.
- Make posters to go on the tube station wall.
- Encourage students to hold newspapers and books, and to peep from behind them.
- Announce the train arriving.
- Play a game where no one can look at each other on the tube, except one person. Get students to work out who's allowed to look!



### Tip

**Encourage students to vocalise their responses.**

- Give each student a different coat and hat to wear on the train and encourage them to choose phones, a paper or book to read – like the characters in the story.
- Spot the animals hiding among all the commuters in the station and on the train. Hide toy animals (like the animals in the book) around the room and get students to find them.
- Talk about the different people on the tube – who are they and where are they all going?
- 'Buy' and 'sell' flowers with coins.
- Get students to smell and feel the flowers or make their own bunches of flowers.
- Recreate the smells and sounds of the different stalls – bake bread or cakes to taste, or chop vegetables to try and count.
- Blow up balloons and watch them float.

## Arriving at work

- Do some small exercises like the crocodile does before starting his job, then all lie down and pose! Play relaxing music.
- Encourage students to dip their toes in a bowl of water.
- Get students to wear sunglasses, smile and say 'cheese' for a picture!
- Make frames to look through, like the visitors looking at the crocodile through the glass.
- Paint crocodile pictures.



# Other sensory experiences

Try these sensory activities to help support your students' engagement and enjoyment of *Professional Crocodile*.

## Routines

Using words, pictures, symbols or signs, create a plan or 'to do' list for the crocodile, including all the things he must do today. Talk about the most important things and add some timings.

Extend this by writing him a shopping list – look at the stalls the crocodile passes and what he might need to buy for breakfast or supper. Don't forget the flowers!

## Emotions

Discuss how the crocodile feels at different points in the book. Look at how other characters feel too, like those on the train. Give students a range of adjectives and try to use them all.



### Tip

How about making crocodile sock puppets to join in the story?

## New stories

Create some new ideas for the crocodile. On a particular page – such as him leaving the house or entering the park gates – choose a new direction for him to take.

For a longer activity, consider a whole new day – what would the crocodile do on his day off? Create some images showing how he might spend his time. Encourage your students to try and surprise the reader!

## Complete the picture

Create an activity around one of the images on the inside cover – you could discuss what the monkey is looking at and draw characters to cut out and place on the blank area of the page.

## Doing your job

Discuss what the crocodile needs to be good at to do his 'job'. Create an advert for a professional crocodile, listing the skills they need and role-play a job interview!

Encourage students to think about the qualities that the other animals – the monkeys, giraffes and elephants – might have and what they could be good at.

## Exploring speech

*Professional Crocodile* offers huge scope for students to generate narrative and dialogue. Together, create speech bubbles to insert words or other sounds that are missing from the story.

Draw a speech bubble on a balloon and bat it to your students. Whoever holds the balloon can either volunteer the sound or speech for a particular page of the story, or nominate a picture on that page for you to add the sound or speech.

## Exploring sound

Some pictures already include sounds, like the alarm clock that wakes up the crocodile with a 'DRIIIIIINNN' noise. With your students, focus on pictures without sounds and discuss what noises they might hear. Ask students to create sound words to add to the pictures.

## More great books

If your students liked *Professional Crocodile*, you may want to try these other great titles:

***The Bear and the Piano***

by David Litchfield

***Gorilla*** by Anthony Browne

***They All Saw a Cat***

by Brendan Wenzel

***The Day Louis Got Eaten***

by John Fardell

***We Found a Hat*** by Jon Klassen

***The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish*** by Neil Gaiman and

Dave McKean

***This Moose Belongs to Me***

by Oliver Jeffers

***Tidy*** by Emily Gravett

## Acknowledgements

Compiled by Alexandra Strick for BookTrust

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Thank you to all those who supplied material, ideas and feedback, particularly Katherine Mullin; staff at The Oaks Special Secondary; Nikki Gray, Andy Tuffs and the students and staff at Foreland Fields School, Ramsgate, Kent; Kimberley Legg, Brookfields School; Lucy Mills; Luana Winston and Mayfield School, Devon; Rachel Bailey; and Sophie Chalmers at Southbrook School, Devon.



Supported using public funding by  
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## About BookTrust

BookTrust is the UK's largest children's reading charity. We are dedicated to getting children reading. Each year we reach 3.4 million children across the UK with books, resources and support to help them develop a love of reading.

We know that children who read are happier, more empathetic and more creative. Find out more at [booktrust.org.uk](https://booktrust.org.uk).

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