

Dark Den Cube/Pop Up Dark Den

Suitable for ages: 3+



Dark dens can be used in different ways. For example, they offer an environment for children to relax and unwind and can also be used to support imaginative role play both individually and cooperatively. The dens have a double, thick nylon skin, creating a dark atmosphere inside. The dark den cube is a stable feature in the room, whereas the pop up dark den is portable and can be taken up and put down easily.

See AIM Inclusive Play website for tips on setting up and taking down the den. Each pack will contain either a dark den cube or pop up dark den.

Key learning this resource may support:

The dens provide opportunities for **sensory experiences** as children can explore shades of light and dark and tune into a range of senses.

The dens provide lots of opportunities for children to engage in **role play and imaginative play** as they decide what and how the den might be used on a particular day.

Social and emotional development may be supported as children engage in play together and individual children may use the den as a safe space when they are feeling overwhelmed within the learning environment.

Suggested starting points for engagement:

- The practitioner might support open ended exploration and play by following the children's lead in terms of how they engage with the dark den. For example, do the children decide it is a house, a boat, a volcano? Follow the children's interests and ideas and participate as appropriately.
- An individual child may be introduced to the dark den as a space that they might find comfortable and safe at times during the daily routine when they might be feeling overwhelmed. Tune into the child's body language and communication about whether this is something that might be helpful for a particular child.
- Consider as a team if the dark den is part of the learning environment or perhaps at certain times it acts as a space for children to go when they need to. The den can be adapted based on children's needs. For example, by putting some cushions inside to enhance cosiness and warmth or providing additional sensory materials inside.

Use your knowledge and understanding of individual children when using this resource as some children may not like being in a darker space.

