
Sensory Play at Home - including *Clean Hands Play*

Sensory play is any activity that stimulates and engage children's senses. It enables children to engage with their senses through the exploration of different materials and textures during play.

Sensory Play can be messy, but it doesn't have to be. Often there are alternatives that are either less messy or not messy at all.

You will probably have things lying around that you can use at home to create sensory activities for your child.

When planning Sensory Play, remember to think about your child's development stage, any possible risks, hazards or allergies and whether the activity needs to be supervised, etc.

Container:

A shallow box or deep tray is a helpful way to keep the activity contained. If it has a lid you can cover the activity when not in use or have a few prepared in advance. For example:



Cosy, snug and quiet space:



Some children will prefer their own cosy space.

You could use a Pop up tent - or drape some fabric or a sheet over an area to make it cosy.

You could add a few cushions, a blanket, a favourite teddy, waterproof mat - depending on the activity.

Sometimes, you could join them in their cosy space, if they are willing.



Ideas and suggestions:

Add sensory resources to your child's everyday play:

For example: Flour, rice, corn, oats, couscous, fruit, sand, hay, shredded paper, etc.



Water play creates good sensory feedback.

As an alternative, you could use rice or couscous, instead of water, for pouring and filling containers.

Bubbles:

Bubbles are usually a favourite, whether watching, catching, popping or blowing them. Use different size containers to make the bubble liquid accessible.



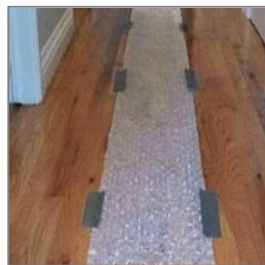
Depending on your child's ability, you could use the top half of a plastic bottle (make it safe). Dip the end in the bubble mixture and blow.



For finer bubbles, add a sock over the end of the bottle.

Bubble Wrap:

Provide bubble wrap on a flat surface for your child to explore. For example: walking on, rolling on, laying on, or perhaps pushing a car along it, etc.



Playdough:

Playdough is a great sensory resource - you could make your own (an example can be found at the end).



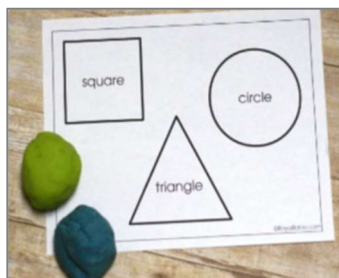
You could also add a smell or texture to the playdough for extra sensory feedback.

For example: glitter, rice, essential oils - like lavender, food colouring, herbs (dried or fresh), natural fruit juice - like strawberry juice, etc.

It's great to just squeeze, squash and poke the playdough.



Print or draw shapes and numbers for your child to create with playdough.



Exploring different textures and sizes of fabric:



Exploring different textures:

There are many different textures around the home.



You could make your own textures activity:

For example: Hide different textures under the lids of wipes, or by adding different textures for your child to explore with their feet.



Stretch elastic bands over a baking tray or tissue box for your child to explore.



Encourage your child to add or remove pom-poms from a whisk.



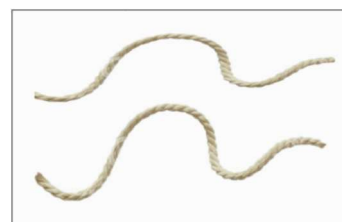
Make a small hole in a container so your child can only just fit the pom-pom through it.



Make small holes in a container and add long ribbons for your child to remove.



Use chalk or wax crayons to make marks on sandpaper.



Stick string to paper (and laminate it, if you can) for your child to follow with their finger, or put paper over it and rub with a crayon.

Painting with Water:

A simple sensory activity - use different size paint brushes and/or rollers to add water to rough surfaces, e.g. brickwork, patio slabs.



Messy Sensory Play:

If your child likes their sensory play to be messy.



Shaving foam with or without food colouring.



Make jelly as per the packet's instructions, leave to set and then cut into cubes.



Add water and small, thinly sliced, pieces of soap to tissue or toilet roll.

Clean Hands Play:

Messy Sensory Play for Clean Hands:

If your child prefers not to get their hands messy - you could cover the activity with film or put it inside a sealable clear bag. For example:



Sensory Bottles:

Fill clear bottles with different objects. You could also add some water, gel (clear hair gel is good) or baby oil - do not add too many things or it won't move around. For example: Beads, coins, pieces of foil, glitter, sequins, etc.

Always attach the lid securely with glue or tape, but check regularly that the lids are still securely attached.

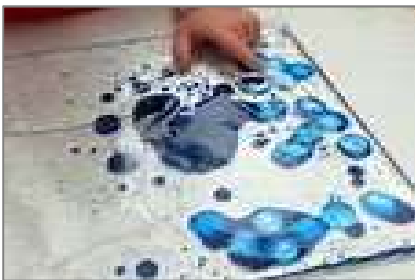
For example:



Sensory bag ideas:

Just like the bottles, fill clear sealable bags with water, gel (clear hair gel is good), dry rice, shaving foam or add some baby oil. Add objects into the bag and seal well - do not add too many things or it won't move around. For example: Beads, glitter, sequins, leaves, paint, buttons, etc.

Always seal securely with glue or tape, but check regularly that the bags are still securely sealed.



You could add some baby oil and food colouring to the water.

Add dry objects and stick to a hard surface. For example: cotton wool, lentils, rice, etc.

Simple Playdough Recipe:

Makes: one coloured ball

You will need:

- 8 tbsp. plain flour
- 2 tbsp. table salt
- 60ml warm water
- 1 tbsp. vegetable oil
- Food colouring (optional)

Method

1. Mix the flour and salt in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, mix together the water, a few drops of food colouring (optional) and the oil.
2. Pour the coloured water into the flour, mix and bring together with a spoon.
3. Dust a work surface with a little flour and turn out the dough. Knead together for a few minutes to form a smooth, pliable dough. If you want a more intense colour you can work in a few extra drops of food colouring.
4. Store in a plastic sandwich bag (squeeze out the air) and store in the fridge to keep it fresh.