



Sensory Play



Why this Is important

Sensory play supports babies and young children to use their senses to explore and make sense of the world. They do this by smelling, tasting, hearing, seeing, touching and moving.

Research shows that sensory play is critical for brain development and enhances memory. It helps babies and young children to develop effective motor skills and it supports language development and communication. Whilst exploring objects during sensory play children develop problem solving skills and decision making skills.

The desire to engage with sensory play comes naturally for most children and should be encouraged and supported both at home and in early learning environments.

As well as the obvious educational benefits, sensory play also supports babies and young children's wellbeing. Sensory experiences can be used to support mindfulness calming the central nervous system, relieving stress, anxiety and frustration.

What to look out for - Observing

- Watch to see if your baby moves their eyes and head to follow moving objects or changes in the environment.
- Does your baby indicate interests and dislikes by using gestures or facial expressions?
- How does your baby use objects they are handling, are they repeating actions?
- Does your baby show preferences to certain materials, textures and noises?



Resources to use

- Treasure basket items – any thing that is safe for your baby to play with which include different materials, textures, shapes, sounds, colour, pattern, weight.
- [Mug trees and curtain rings/bracelets](#)
- Foil blankets
- Empty bottles of different sizes filled with various household items or outdoor materials. The lids can be glued shut to secure bottle.
- Boxes/ Tins of different shapes and sizes ie Toblerone box, jewellery box, biscuit/chocolate tin.
- Measuring cups and spoons, pots and pans, plastic containers with lids.
- Collections natural materials such as of shells, large stones, pinecones, feathers, leaves, twigs

What is your child learning?

Activities and experiences to offer to try



Touching, feeling and exploring

Have hands on experiences in the natural environment. For example splashing in puddles or crunching the Autumn leaves.

Make your own [treasure basket](#) to explore at home.

Offer sensory textures to touch and crawl through. grass, sand, paint, gloop, shaving foam, water, a mix of velvety, silky or crinkly fabrics.



Watching

Blow bubbles either indoors or outdoors. Watch and talk with the baby about where they will land.

Hide toys under cloths or inside boxes and watch to see how your child finds the hidden item.



Smelling

Fill socks or organza bags with scented items. Describe the smell.

Make scented [playdough](#) by adding a food extract or pick fresh herbs and let your child squish them into the playdough.



Listening

Turn empty bottles into sensory bottles and explore different sounds. For example, add couscous, rice,



Body perception and balance

Enjoy [Knee bobbing songs](#) with your baby

Offer daily [Tummy time](#) activities



Tasting and mouthing

(Weaning and beyond) Give your baby new foods and tastes to explore. Offer the whole fruit to see and feel as well as the bite-sized pieces to taste.

More Ideas and further suggestions

[Parents guide to the seven senses](#)- By Pathways

[How to make Sensory bottles](#) – By Kids craft room

[Healthy snacks for kids](#)- By The imagination tree

[Sensory play for 0-12 months](#) By Candoo kido