



The **TOTLETTER**

Summer 2017

Sensory Play

Why Sensory Play is Important for Children

What is sensory play? Toddlers and children learn best through their senses. Any play which stimulates the use of touch, smell, sight, hearing, using fine motor muscles, etc. is considered sensory play. Stimulating neural pathways through sensory experiences is a crucial part of kids' early brain development.

A young child has been seeing, smelling, hearing, feeling, and tasting. Their whole lives! Children are wired to receive and utilize sensory input from day one. This is why children will dive in hands first, exploring a new substance. The senses are their most familiar, most basic way to explore, process, and come to understand new information. Sensory play lays a crucial foundation for later learning skills!

Stimulating senses through play sends signals to the brain, which helps develop its ability to identify objects and explore the world. Learning to differentiate sharp from round, smooth from rough, cold from warm is a basic step in empowering the brain's ability to discover, classify, and sort more sophisticated information later through life. If children have enough room to get messy with various types of sensory (water, sand, flour, mud, digging, pouring, rolling or sliding materials), they will have more experience stretching their sensors and exploring various concepts of space and movement. Young children learn best by being active and personally experiencing various sensations.

Why Getting Messy is so Beneficial for a Child's Development

While they play and explore, kids learn so many things!

That bin of sand, or foam, or colorful rice is more than just another way to keep kids busy, it is a

bustling factory of developmental growth. In addition to honing sensory and science skills, sensory play builds language, social, and dramatic play skills as the children negotiate with one another to share tools, create stories, and build dialogues. Both small and large motor skills get a boost as well, as the children manipulate the medium and tools.

Sensory play provides an opportunity for every child to succeed. No matter whether you are gifted or delayed, learning a new language or mastering your first!

All Kids Need Help Learning How to Use Their Senses

Be sure to provide your kids with opportunities to explore their senses.

Find ways to optimize sensory play for your children. Whether that's providing a bin of sand to explore, giving your child a dish wand and plastic dishes to "wash" at the sink, or finding ways to integrate the senses into your other activities, provide space and time for sensory play! It's a natural and satisfying way to explore and learn!

Source: taken in part from kidsfirstcommunity.com and notjustcute.com

Sensory Play Activities

Whisking Bubbles

You will need:

- Big, plastic container
- Whisks (optional)
- Dish Soap
- Optional - food coloring

Add a big squirt (about 1/3 cup) of dish soap to the plastic container. Add some food colouring, if desired. Then add some water — deep enough so that the whisk (or your hands) can be used in the container

easily -- being careful not to create too many bubbles when the water is added (that's the child's job!).

This is a great arm- and hand-strengthening activity. Eventually you may have bubbles all the way to the top of the container!



Once the bubbles are plentiful, the child can use them to make "bubble plants", or they can bake "bubble cakes". They are only limited by their imagination!

Make sure the bubble water is thoroughly rinsed away once the activity is complete.

Adapted from emmaowl.com

Washing Farm Animal Sensory Bin

This simple farm animal sensory bin can be set up in minutes and is irresistible-the kids will be begging for a turn as soon as they spot it!

You will need:

- 1-2 plastic bins
- water
- dish soap
- plastic farm animals
- dirt
- washcloths, brushes, sponges, etc

Before the farm animals can get 'clean' they need to get dirty!

1. **Set up a muddy area** for the animals by mixing some of the dirt with water. We found that getting the dirt moist but not too wet worked best for repeated washings.

2. **Add the dish soap to the water** to create bubbles and add the animals and cleaning supplies.
3. Call the kids over to play! **Let them take the lead** by not providing too many instructions.

Source: coffeecupsandcrayons.com



Cornmeal Sand Castle Dough

You will need:

- Cornmeal
- Oil (any type)
- 1-2 plastic bins to play with the dough in
- Toys (cars, animals, people, bowls, spoon etc.)

Mix approximately 2 cups cornmeal to 3/4 cup oil. The amounts may vary, so be sure to mix to create desired consistency.

This dough feels great and can even be shaped. Be sure to add a few toys, for even more fun!

*TIP: You can start out with nothing in the bin except the dough and slowly add a few things and it will extend the length of time your child plays and allow them to thoroughly investigate each new element of play



Craft Ideas

Outdoor Tree Bark Rubbings

The rubbings will make a very cool pattern! Afterwards you can cut up the easel paper into placements for the children to use.

Materials: Old Crayons with their wrappings removed, Easel paper, Packing Tape



1. Take the easel paper and wrap it around the tree trunk.
2. Secure it with packing tape.
3. Make sure the crayon wrappers have been removed.
4. Show the children how to hold the crayon horizontally to create the rubbing effect on the paper.

Adapted from icanteachmychild.com

Cardboard Rainbow Collage

Materials: Rainbow colored paper collage material (i.e. a combo of cut up old art, colored paper, scrapbook paper, and fabric), Buttons, Pom-poms, Glue, Cardboard rainbow shapes (cereal boxes or you can also use thicker cardboard from boxes)

1. Make a rainbow template. Cut out one rainbow shape



- from regular paper, and use that to trace on top of the cardboard.
2. Prepare your collage materials by cutting into square and rectangle shapes. Use coloured paper, patterned scrapbook paper, fabric scraps, etc.
3. Separate each color into its own tray and add some buttons of the same colour.
4. If you have pom-poms, put some in a basket.
5. To set up your table, just put one rainbow at each place along with one glue, and spread the collage material along the table. The children will have to get up and walk around to find the colour they need. For smaller children who may just use what is in front of them, gather a little of each color and put it next to their rainbow.
6. Then, let the children do their thing. You can just stand back and enjoy watching their process!

Source: artbarblog.com

Outdoor Cardboard Painting

This is a messy craft so it is best executed on a sunny day when followed by sprinkler play, for easy clean-up.

Materials: large cardboard box (cut open and lying flat), plates of different colours of finger paints, chunky paintbrushes (optional).

This craft doesn't require instructions. It's painting on a giant, cardboard canvas, outside! Be prepared for children to get messy and full of paint as they can use their hands, feet, or paintbrushes to create a masterpiece on the cardboard canvas!



Activities

Threading Station

Putting together a threading station is so easy! You will need:

- Cut up straws- take different coloured straws and cut them into 1" lengths
- Pipe cleaners
- A large storage container to hold all the materials

Don't be fooled by how simple this looks! This helps children work on fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and spatial awareness.



Adapted from: busytoddler.com

Pom-pom Drop

You will need: cardboard tube (paper towel), pompoms that will fit through the tube, painter's tape, small container.

Tape the tube to the wall, vertically. Place the container underneath the tube and demonstrate how to drop the pom-poms through the tube so that they land in the container.

Note: this activity requires constant supervision.



Adapted from: laughingkidslearn.com

Taped Toys

You will need: cardboard for the background, safe toys, masking or scotch tape

The set up is easy-- using a large piece of cardboard, spread out the toys and tape them down. The activity involves you watching the child as they work hard to remove the toys from the board and from the tape.

You can vary the level of difficulty with this simple play activity by adding different sized objects. The **larger the object, the easier it is likely to be removed** from the board. Alternatively, you can **add flatter objects** that are stuck closer to the board; these will be harder to remove. You can also **add more tape** to the toys so they are stuck a lot more than a toy with only one piece of tape over it.



As you can imagine, this is such a wonderful sensory activity for children. If you include a variety of toys that vary in textures (wood, plastic, fabric, etc) then you are giving the child an added learning opportunity.

Including the sticky tape in this activity is wonderful because often children don't get the opportunity to feel sticky. We are so quick to wipe away their sticky hands they don't get to experience it. Using the stickiness of the tape gives them that special sensation.

Fine motor skills are so important, children need them for writing, drawing, grasping objects and so this is an ideal activity to do with them because the pinching action of pulling at the tape works those small fine motor muscles in the hand.

Source: laughingkidslearn.com

Simple Colour Scavenger Hunt

This simple color scavenger hunt for kids is unbelievably easy to put together and can be done multiple times because the treasures can always be different.

The best part about this simple colour scavenger hunt is that it's so versatile. You can do it anywhere that you'll be enjoying outdoors. Make one for a trip to the park, or even for playing in your own backyard. Using a paper lunch sack is also perfect because kids have a place to store all of their new treasures. Also, you can return the items you found back to nature and play all over again as many times as you'd like.

Materials:

white paper
lunch bag,
markers

Directions:

1. Write "Colour Scavenger Hunt" at the top of your white paper lunch bag.
2. Choose the colours you want the children to hunt for and use your coloured markers to scribble small squares onto the front of the bag of each colour.
3. Pass out the bags to the children and let them have fun finding all of the colours on the bag. When they find an item that matches one of the colours, place it in the bag. When everyone is finished, sit in a circle and have a fun time having a show and tell about all of the items everyone found.

Source: iheartcraftythings.com



Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday,
Saturday is the last day
And I can say them all!

Lunch is on the Way

Sung to: The Farmer in the Dell

The lunch is on the way,
The lunch is on the way,
Heigh-o the derry-o,
The lunch is on the way.

We all will eat our food,
We all will eat our food,
Heigh-o the derry-o,
We all will eat our food.

The food will help us grow,
The food will help us grow,
Heigh-o the derry-o,
The food will help us grow.

And then we'll take our naps,
And then we'll take our naps,
Heigh-o the derry-o,
And then we'll take our naps.

And we will grow some more,
And we will grow some more,
Heigh-o the derry-o,
YES we will grow some more!

Show Me if You Can

Sung to: In and Out the Window

Whe-ere is your finger?
Whe-ere is your finger?
Whe-ere is your finger?
Show me if you can.

Good, now where's your nose?
Now, where is your nose?
Now, where is your nose?
Show me if you can.

*Repeat the song with other body parts

Songs and Fingerplays

Seven Days in a Week

Sung to: For He's a Jolly Good Fellow

Oh, there's seven days in a week,
Seven days in a week,
Seven days in a week,
And I can say them all.

Sunday and Monday and Tuesday

CLEAN UP SONG

Sung to: "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star"

★ Twinkle, twinkle little star,
time to clean up where you are.
Put the toys back in their place.
Keep a smile upon your face.
Twinkle, twinkle little star,
time to clean up where you are.



Tasty Treats

Honey Barbecue Meatloaf

Ingredients:

- 1 pound 90% lean ground beef
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plain panko bread crumbs
- 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon dijon mustard
- 4 tablespoons smoky barbecue sauce
- 1 tablespoon honey
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. In a large bowl, use your hands to mix together the ground beef, panko, 1 tablespoon of the worcestershire sauce, the mustard, 3 tablespoons of the barbecue sauce, the salt, and pepper. Do not overwork the meat.
2. Shape the mixture into a long, thick log and place in an oiled baking dish. Be careful not to pack the meat too tightly or you'll end up with a very dense, tough loaf.

3. In a small bowl, whisk together the remaining 1 tablespoon barbecue sauce, the remaining 2 teaspoons worcestershire sauce, and the honey. Spread evenly over the meatloaf bake for 45 minutes. Slice and serve!



Source: anndiemitchell.com

The Busy Mom's Oatmeal Bowl Smoothie

This power-packed smoothie delivers all the healthy energy of a bowl of oatmeal in a delicious smoothie form that means faster consumption and less clean up-- perfect for kids!

Ingredients:

- $1\frac{1}{2}$ frozen bananas
- 2 Tbsp peanut butter
- 1 Tbsp chia seeds
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsp honey
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oats
- 10 oz almond milk

Instructions:

1. Layer ingredients in the blender according to your blender's instructions.
2. Select smoothie mode. If your blender does not have a smoothie button, alternate blending between low and high speeds until all ingredients are fully incorporated.
3. Serve immediately.

Source: ahealthysliceoflife.com

