

SENSORY PLAY

for children

What is sensory play?

Sensory play involves activities that stimulate one or more of our senses—touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing—as well as balance (vestibular) and body awareness (proprioception). This type of play engages children in hands-on exploration that supports child development, enhances cognitive skills, and encourages social and emotional growth.

Why is it important for children?

Sensory play is important for child development as it helps build skills in movement, thinking, language and communication, and emotional regulation. Sensory play helps a child to develop skills in how their body processes sensory information. The term 'sensory processing' refers to the way the brain receives, organises and responds to sensory input. Through sensory activities, children learn to make sense of what they feel, see, hear, and touch, which also improves coordination and body awareness. Playing with materials like sand or playdough strengthens motor skills, while exploring different textures and sounds which boosts problem-solving and thinking abilities. Sensory play also encourages social and language growth as children express their discoveries with others.



How can you encourage sensory play at home?

You can encourage sensory play at home by using everyday items and simple activities that engage their senses. Just make sure children are supervised for water, outdoor and cooking play. Here are a few ideas:

Texture Bins

- Small tubs filled with rice, pasta, sand, fidgets, and toys.
- Add spoons, cups, or toys to make even more interactive.

Outdoor Play

- Nature offers plenty of sensory experiences!
- Encourage children to play with leaves, dirt, rocks, and flowers. Or jump in muddy puddles! (only if you're prepared)
- They can feel different textures and see lots of colour.
- Visit the local park to swing, spin, crawl, slide, and jump!

Cooking Together

- Letting children help with simple cooking preparation or tasks is a great way to stimulate their senses.
- Encourage mixing batter, smelling spices, rolling dough, and taste testing ingredients.

Water Play

- Even a small tub of water with cups, sponges, and toys can provide a sensory experience that helps children learn concepts like floating, pouring, and sinking.

Arts & Crafts

- Provide your child with safe materials like finger paints, playdough, crayons, glitter, glue, coloured tissue paper, pom-poms, and pipe cleaners.
- Playing with these help children develop fine motor skills while exploring colours and textures.

