

Sensory Play



Creating an Engaging Interest Center

What Children Are Learning

- **Making sense of information received from the five senses**
- **Basics of the Scientific Method:**
 - Forming a hypothesis
 - Experimenting
 - Making conclusions
- **Focusing on play while blocking out stimulations not important to the play experience**



Developmental Skills Typically Acquired

Senses

- Stimulates the senses of touch, sight, smell, hearing and taste

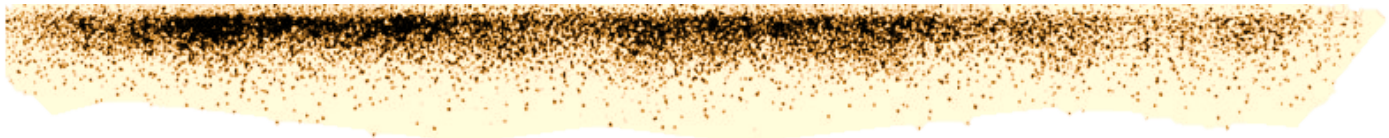
Brain

- Strengthens nerve connections in the brain

Motor

- Improves fine and gross motor skills

NOTE: This is not an exhaustive list, and children will develop according to their own individual timelines.



Materials and Storage

Foods to Taste (Not to Be Included in a Sensory Table or Bin)	Plastic Letters or Numbers to Bury or Find	Ice (Natural and Colored)	Sand Foam (Sand and Shaving Cream)
Squishy Bags	Play Dough	Flashlights to Shine on Objects	Sand (Natural and Colored)
Variety of Flat and 3D Shapes	Water With Soap Added	Tissue Paper	Fabric with Different Textures

All Materials Are Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) for All Age Groups

NOTE: Appropriately monitor children and include variations based on interest and developmental skills.

Storage



Large sensory tables can accommodate the play of 4 to 6 children, and individual sensory bins can also be created using plastic tubs with lids.

Contact the OECOSL Child Care Support Line at 1.800.299.1627 for assistance.



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Best Practices

DON'T wait until infants and toddlers can use art tools the “right” way. They need to practice using their brains to figure out how those supplies work.

DO use noise-reduction headphones and individual zip-style baggies containing “messy” materials for children with sensory sensitivities.

DO use explanations that speak from a strength-based perspective. For example, instead of “Jon needs headphones because loud noises hurt his ears,” say, “Jon has super ears and can even hear quiet sounds well.”

Activities and Project Ideas

Bubbles

- Watch how bubbles float.
- Feel them land on skin.

Light

- Watch light and shadows change on different objects with a flashlight.

Paint

- Watch how colors mix in pudding (younger learners) or shaving cream (older learners).
- Feel the materials while mixing.

Paper

- Listen how different types of paper sound when scrunched up.
- Feel how different materials fold in your hand when scrunched up.

Nature

- Smell various nature objects like grass and pinecones.
- Listen to nature sounds and identify them.
- Feel different textured objects.

Family Engagement

Encourage family engagement by suggesting they include sensory play as part of regular routines and experiences, which would include:

- Collecting nature items from around their homes to make a Nature Tub. For example, shells, branches, leaves, rocks, soil, flowers, and more
- Listing items around the home that lend themselves to sensory exploration and having the children bring in an approved material or item to introduce and explore with their friends



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **12 Benefits of Sensory Play with Activities You Can do at Home**
<https://theivyacademy.org/12-benefits-of-sensory-play-with-activities-you-can-do-at-home/>
- **Exploring the Benefits of Sensory Play**
<https://www.goodstart.org.au/news-and-advice/october-2016/exploring-the-benefits-of-sensory-play>
- **“What’s the harm if I paint my arm?”: A Toddler’s Guide to Sensory Activities in the Home**
<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/blog/toddlers-guide-sensory-activities-home>

