

Sensory

Play

Ideas



# Reasons for Sensory Play

## **Language development.**

When children are participating in new and novel experiences it gives them the opportunity to learn and practice new words and phrases. Learning through the senses helps children develop classifying and categorization skills.

## **Cognitive development.**

Sensory play builds nerve connections in the brain's pathways, which develops the child's ability to complete more complex learning tasks. Sensory play Encourages problem solving skills.

## **Fine motor skill development.**

Practicing manipulation skills in a novel and fun way fine tunes the skills needed to manipulate smaller objects and also complete everyday tasks.

## **Social development.**

Sensory play activities give children the opportunity to learn to play alongside others and share space and resources in a safe and stimulating way.

# Easy play dough recipe



# The benefits of playing with play dough

## It develops fine motor and manipulative skills

- use it with cutting and moulding tools. Add buttons, stones, shells to the dough.

## It can relieve frustration

- By focusing on an activity and applying pressure. You could add calming scents such as lavender or lemon oil.

## It can develop representational skills

- use the play dough to make cupcakes using cake cases. Or make animal shapes using cutters.

## It can develop language skills

- talk about what you are doing and how the play dough feels as you are doing it.

## You need:

2 cups plain flour

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1/2 cup salt

2 tablespoons cream of tartar (available in big tubs in Waitrose)

Up to 1.5 cups boiling water (adding in increments until it feels just right)

food colouring (optional)

few drops glycerine (optional- adds more shine!)

- Mix the flour, salt, cream of tartar and oil in a large mixing bowl
- Add food colouring TO the boiling water then into the dry ingredients (colour optional)
- Stir continuously until it becomes a sticky, combined dough
- Add the glycerine (optional)
- Allow it to cool down then take it out of the bowl and knead it vigorously for a couple of minutes until all of the stickiness has gone. \* This is the most important part of the process, so keep at it until it's the perfect consistency!\* (If it remains a little sticky then add a touch more flour until just right)



Coloured Ice

# The benefits of playing with ice

## It can develop problem solving skills

- Freeze objects (little toy animals or people, leaves, petals) and talk about how you are going to get them out.

## It provides an interesting and unusual touch sensation

- allow exploration through the medium of touch with hands, mouths, feet! Pick up the ice, feel the rough and smooth surfaces.

## It can develop language skills

- Investigate how water turns into ice and then melts again.. Talk about what is happening and describe what you feel when you touch it.

## It develops fine motor and manipulative skills

- Use tools (e.g. Cutlery) to chisel, chip and bash the ice.

## You need:

Plastic containers (cheap ones from value shops work well)

A variety of different food colouring colours

A freezer!

Water

Objects and toys to add if you choose- lego figures, plastic animals, natural objects such as feathers, fur cones, leaves, flowers., petals

A tray or water table suitable to play with the ice.

- Choose your containers, ensuring that you have enough room in your freezer and that they will fit
- Fill containers with water
- Add food colouring
- Add toys or objects if desired
- Freeze water over night
- Take out of the freezer 15 mins before you want to play in order to allow the ice to slide easily out of the containers.



# Sensory rice



# The benefits of playing with sensory rice

## It develops fine motor and manipulative skills

•Use small containers, cups, scoops, spoons, funnels to scoop, tip, transfer and pour the rice

## It can relieve frustration

•By focusing on an activity, running hands through the rice. You could add calming scents such as cinnamon, lavender, herbal tea bags.

## It can develop imaginative play

Add toy diggers to the rice and play dumps. Add toy animals to the rice and play safari.

## It can develop language and mathematical skills

•Talk about what you are doing- tipping, pouring, filling, emptying.

## You need:

Inexpensive white rice

white vinegar (1/2 tsp per 1 cup of rice)

food colouring or icing gels (I use [Wilton Icing Gels](#))

plastic container with lid

something to dry your rice on i.e. A tray, baking sheet, pie plate

- Pour one cup of rice into a container.
- Add some food colouring and the 1/2 tsp of vinegar, and close the lid on your container.
- Now for the fun part! SHAKE, SHAKE, SHAKE!

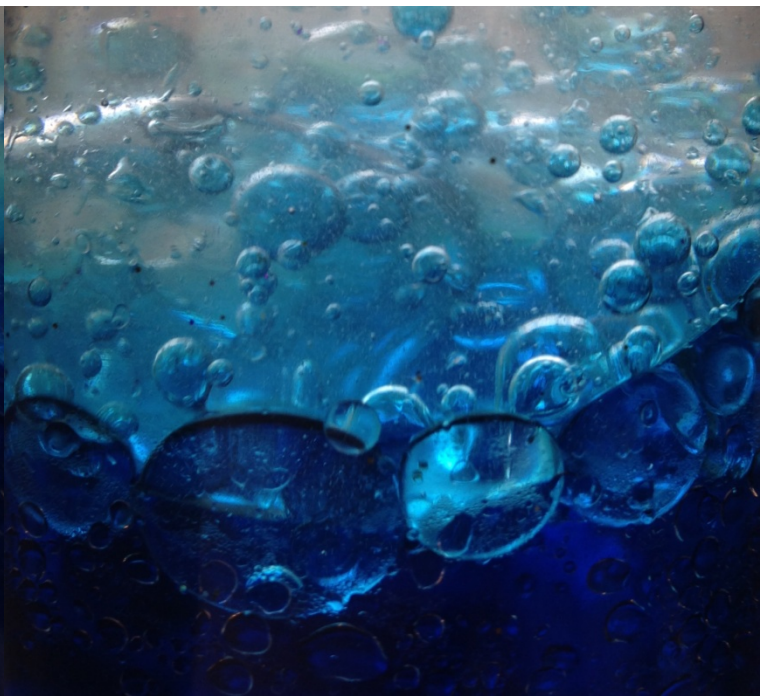
Once your rice is evenly coloured, dump it out on your baking sheet to dry for a few hours

You can add anything you like to the rice to make it an interesting and stimulating play activity. Here are a few ideas: magnetic numbers or letters, buttons, pom poms, glitter and sequins, funnels, ladles, scoops, cardboard tubes.





# Sensory bottles



# The benefits of playing with sensory bottles

## It develops fine motor and manipulative skills

- Shake the bottles and see what happens. Tip them slowly or quickly.

## It calms and soothes

Look closely at the bottles, listen to the sounds they make

## It can develop language skills

- Talk about what you can see- different colours shapes, objects in the bottles.

## You need:

Empty plastic bottles (lucuzade bottles are good as the label is easy to peel off), Strong glue (e.g. Superglue) duct tape

## Make a liquid sensory bottle add:

water  
baby oil  
cooking oil  
hair gel  
food colouring

## Make a dry sensory bottle by pouring in:

rice  
dry pasta  
coloured sand  
feathers  
Beads  
Aquarium gravel

## Add pieces to the liquid base:

toys  
beads  
feathers  
Glitter and sequins  
buttons  
pom poms



Sensory bags

# The benefits of playing with sensory bags

## It develops fine motor and manipulative skills

•Push the gel around the bags, explore what happens to the objects., feel new sensations.

## It calm and soothe

Look closely at the bags, enjoy the theraputic nature of the feel of the gel.

## It can develop language skills

•Talk about what you can see- different colours shapes, objects in the gel. Add letters and numbers and talk about them, play 'I spy'.

## You need:

Zip lock stationary bags or very strong food bags

Cheap hair gel (Wilkos does a clear gel)

Glitter, sequins

A range of small objects to go inside the bag like: Buttons, pom poms, beads or basically anything without sharp edges.

Strong duct tape

Food colouring

- Colour the gel with food colouring before you add to the bag.
- Add gel to the bag along with any items that you choose to put in.
- Push out all excess air and seal bag.
- Tape bag around all four edges to prevent leakage.
- You can attach the bag to the window to allow the light to shine through.

## Useful websites

For more ideas of sensory play activities check out these websites. Pinterest also has loads of ideas, just search 'sensory play'. Have fun!!!!

- <http://happyhooligans.ca/>
- <http://theimaginationtree.com/>
- <http://www.growingajeweledrose.com>
- <http://nurturestore.co.uk/>
- <http://www.learnplayimagine.com/>