

## What is Sensory Play?

Sensory play is any activity that stimulates children's senses: touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing. Stimulating the senses helps children develop thinking, language, social-emotional, and physical skills.

Through sensory play, children explore and naturally use scientific processes while they play, investigate, create and discover new sensations.

Sensory play is also linked to supporting early child development. For example, listening to new sounds supports language development, and sorting unique materials, like soft versus hard items, supports fine-motor skill coordination and cognitive development.

## What are Sensory Activities?

Sensory activities are projects specifically designed to engage a child's senses. They open the door for play and experiential learning, allowing kids to explore and experience the world.....and *sensory activities are just plain old fun!*

Sensory activities can be messy. So if you're not a mess fan, try the outdoors to help keep the mess outside.

<https://www.famlii.com/what-is-sensory-play/>

# Why Sensory Play is Important for Development

From birth through early childhood, children use their senses to explore and try to make sense of the world around them. They do this by touching, tasting, smelling, seeing, moving, and hearing.

Children and adults learn best and retain the most information when they engage their senses. Many of our favorite memories are associated with one or more of our senses: for instance, the smell of a summer night campfire or a song you memorized the lyrics to with a childhood friend. Now, when your nostrils and eardrums are stimulated with those familiar smells and sounds respectively, your brain triggers a flashback memory to those times.

Providing opportunities for children to actively use their senses as they explore their world through “sensory play” is crucial to brain development as it builds nerve connections in the brain’s pathways. This leads to a child’s ability to complete more complex learning tasks and supports cognitive growth, language development, gross motor skills, social interaction and problem solving skills.

## What is Sensory Play

Sensory play includes an activity that stimulates your young child’s senses. Sensory activities facilitate exploration and naturally encourage children to use scientific processes while they play, create, investigate and explore. The sensory activities allow children to refine their thresholds for different sensory information, thus, helping their brain to create stronger connections to process and respond to sensory information.

For example, initially a child may find it difficult to play appropriately with a peer when there are other things going on in the environment due to conflicting noise. However, through sensory play, exploring sounds while participating in hands-on tasks offers the child the opportunity to adapt to being able to block out the noise which is not important to the current task and focus on the play which is occurring with their peer.

Another example is a child who is particularly fussy with eating foods with a wet texture, like spaghetti. By introducing wet sensory play activities, the child can touch, smell and explore in the environment without the expectation of having to eat it. This will give the child the opportunity to build trust and understanding of the disliked texture and to help build positive pathways that might allow for the child to determine that it is safe to eat wet food in the future. Sensory play helps to shape in the brain what children believe as positive and safe activities.