The Child Unplugged

SENSORY

Activity Book



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Introduction

Sensory Play is a hands-on learning experience that encourages children to explore the world through their senses—touch, sight, sound, smell, and sometimes taste. By interacting with different textures, materials, and movements, children build curiosity, creativity, and confidence while developing fine and gross motor skills, problem-solving abilities, and language development. Sensory activities also support focus, emotional regulation, and early cognitive growth in a fun and engaging way.







Why Sensory Is So Valuable

- Supports brain development by strengthening connections through hands-on exploration
- Builds fine and gross motor skills through scooping, pouring, squeezing, and moving
- Encourages curiosity and problem-solving as children experiment and discover
- Improves focus and concentration during interactive activities

Sensory play allows children to learn through play, making learning meaningful, memorable, and fun.

How to Support Play at Home

Create a safe, engaging space with simple materials, let children explore freely, and join in to encourage creativity and learning.

Basic setup:

- Choose a safe, open space for play.
- Gather simple materials like toys, household items, or sensory resources.
- Use trays, containers, or mats to organize activities.

Simple steps:

- Introduce the activity and demonstrate if needed.
- Let children explore freely and follow their curiosity.
- Ask questions, encourage imaginative play, and join in occasionally.

Helpful tips:

- Rotate materials to keep play fresh and engaging.
- Keep activities open-ended to encourage creativity.







Ideas

Include everyday items to show that learning can happen anywhere.

SNOW AND CARS

WHATS NEEDED:

Super simple and quick setup—great for keeping kids busy.

- Flour
- Cars
- Tray

Options - add cooking oil to make the flour pliable.

WHAT TO DO:

- Add flour to a large container or tuff tray.
- Include cars or trucks for digging, driving, and exploring.
- Encourages imaginative and sensory play.

BENEFITS:

- Flour is naturally inviting—soft, smooth, and fun to touch.
- It's perfect for creating varied textures with just a few added elements.
- Flour sensory bins offer endless play possibilities and never lose their appeal.
- This is super simple to set up, easy to clean, and always worth the mess!
- Taste Safe



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Gathered a few supplies, such as measuring spoons, a slotted spoon, and a can strainer, and let them play.
- Trace letters/numbers/shapes
- Hand prints
- This activity could be switched up with several alternate ingredients, i.e., rice, sand, playdough, etc
- You play hide and seek, hiding small objects inside and getting your child to find them.

FLOATING FLOWERS

WHATS NEEDED:

- Flowers
- Water
- Additional bowls, tongs and spoons etc
- Glitter for extra effect or anything else you might want to add
- Food coluring or paint to change the colour of the water

WHAT TO DO:

- Use real, dried, or artificial flowers—just add water and utensils for open-ended floral fun.
- Try freezing petals in ice cube trays or muffin tins for an extra sensory twist!

BENEFITS:

- Encourages nature appreciation and exploration
- See colors and shapes, smell flowers, feel textures
- Use spoons to build hand-eye coordination and control
- Practice fine motor skills with tongs for picking and transferring



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children:** Focus on simple scooping and floating play.
- **For older children:** Add counting, sorting, or pattern-making with the flowers.
- **Add tools:** Use spoons, tweezers, or cups to strengthen fine motor skills.
- **Color exploration:** Encourage sorting flowers by color, size, or type.
- **Imaginative play:** Turn it into a flower shop, potion lab, or garden scene.

PEEK-A-BOO BOARD!

WHATS NEEDED:

- Create a simple DIY sensory board using wipe lids for peek-a-boo fun.
- Cardboard
- Hot glue gun!
- Diaper wipe lids
- Materials such as felt, dry pasta, pom poms, corrugated cardboard, bubble wrap, or whatever else you have

WHAT TO DO:

- Hide different textures behind each lid to engage touch and curiosity.
- Cut cardboard to fit spaced-out wipe lids
- Trim and glue sensory materials inside lids.
- For small items (e.g., pasta), glue the lid first, then add items.
- Ensure lids close properly.
- Use varied textures for rich sensory play.

BENEFITS:

- Develops object permanence as children learn that objects still exist when hidden
- Encourages curiosity and exploration through lifting and discovering
- Supports fine motor skills by opening flaps or moving pieces
- Promotes language development through naming objects and reactions



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Swap textures (e.g., silk, felt, fur) for sensory variety
- Use bold colors for visual appeal
- Hide letters/numbers for early literacy
- Create fun themes (animals, seasons, etc.)
- Add sounds like crinkling paper or bells
- Mix lid sizes for motor skill practice

BOWL OF BUBBLES

WHATS NEEDED:

- Container
- Whisk
- Washing up liquid
- Food dye

WHAT TO DO:

- Whisk washing-up liquid quickly in a bowl for large bubbles.
- Tip: Use a food processor to make bubbles more intense and fun.
- Add food dye for colorful bubbles.

BENEFITS:

- Enhances sensory exploration through touch and visual movement
- Develops fine motor skills when scooping, popping, or blowing bubbles
- Encourages hand-eye coordination while reaching and catching bubbles
- Supports language development through describing bubbles and actions



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children:** Use smaller amounts of bubble solution and focus on popping and touching bubbles.
- **For older children:** Introduce tools like spoons, straws, or bubble wands to blow, scoop, and create patterns.
- **Add colors:** Use food dye to explore mixing colors and making rainbow bubbles.
- **Incorporate learning:** Practice counting bubbles, sorting by size, or using bubbles in simple math games.

POURING WATER

WHATS NEEDED:

- Various sized tubs
- Various washing tools
- Water

WHAT TO DO:

- Pour water into various sized containers.
- Add sponges and cloths for squeezing and soaking.
- Include watering cans for pretend garden play.
- Use wooden spoons for stirring and scooping.
- Encourage exploration of volume, flow, and texture.

BENEFITS:

- Encourages skill development across ages through water play.
- Builds fine motor skills with actions like pouring, stirring, and squeezing.
- Improves hand-eye coordination through scooping and squirting.
- Supports gross motor development during larger water movements.
- Promotes control and precision through repeated practice.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use different containers for varied grips and pouring styles.
- Add food colouring to the mix and explore colours.
- Include ice for temperature and texture changes.
- Add beads or sponges for scooping and floating fun.
- Pour soapy water for bubbly sensory play.
- Play indoors or outdoors to manage mess.
- Aim into bottles or marked levels for a challenge.
- Use small jugs for little hands to build control

WATER BEADS

WHATS NEEDED:

- Water beads
- Sea animal toys

WHAT TO DO:

- Just add water—watch them grow and transform
- Colourful, shiny, and fun to touch
- Place in a bin for open-ended exploration
- Add sea animal toys for imaginative play
- Scoop, sort by colour, freeze, or smash in sensory bags
- Great for sensory, fine motor, and creative play

BENEFITS:

- Soft, squishy, and smooth—great for tactile exploration
- Support fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination
- Encourage creativity and sensory play
- Help with learning colours and texture recognition
- Introduce early science (absorption) and math concepts (size changes, volume)
- Promote curiosity and open-ended play



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Add shaving cream
- Place the beads in cookie cutters
- Add to balloons
- Mix with slime
- Freeze and smash
- Create a mini world sensory

CLOUD HIDE AND SEEK

WHATS NEEDED:

- Container
- Cotton wall balls
- A variety of household objects/toys

WHAT TO DO:

- Fill a container with cotton wool balls to create a “cloud.”
- Hide small toys or objects within the cotton
- Let children search, uncover, and discover the hidden items
- Encourage exploration, fine motor skills, and imaginative play

BENEFITS:

- Enhances sensory exploration through touch and texture
- Develops fine motor skills by digging and uncovering objects
- Encourages problem-solving and focus while searching
- Promotes curiosity and imaginative play
- Supports hand-eye coordination during the activity



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children:** Hide fewer or larger objects for easy finding
- **For older children:** Hide smaller items or increase cotton thickness for more challenge
- **Add tools:** Use tweezers or spoons to dig through the “cloud.”
- **Incorporate themes:** Use seasonal or themed objects for imaginative play

AQUARIUM IN A BOTTLE

WHATS NEEDED:

- Water
- Sand
- Empty bottle
- Small ocean animal toys
- Blue food coloring (optional)
- Small shells (optional)
- Glue for the lid to seal tight (If you want to reuse the animals later, keep the lid unglued.)

WHAT TO DO:

- Add about 2 inches of sand to a clear plastic bottle.
- Fill the rest of the bottle with water, leaving a little space at the top.
- Add small shells and a drop of blue food coloring for an ocean effect.
- Let the child choose ocean animals to place inside the bottle.
- Secure the lid tightly
- Gently shake and observe—the aquarium is ready for sensory play!

BENEFITS:

- Encourages sensory exploration through movement, color, and sound.
- Supports language development as children describe what they see.
- Enhances visual tracking skills as items float & swirl.
- Promotes calm and focus, useful for self-regulation.
- Sparks creativity and storytelling through imaginative play.
- Great for fine motor development while assembling the bottle.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children:** Use larger items and fewer pieces for easy manipulation.
- **For older children:** Add smaller objects, glitter, or multiple layers to increase complexity.
- **Add tools:** Provide droppers, funnels, or spoons to transfer water and objects.
- **Themed variations:** Include fish, sea creatures, or ocean plants to create different underwater scenes.
- **Color exploration:** Use colored water or food dye for visual learning.
- **Group play:** Encourage children to share bottles or create a collective “aquarium” display.

MELTING INSECTS

WHATS NEEDED:

- Water
- Ice trays
- Miniature figures

WHAT TO DO:

- Place insect or other figurines into ice cube trays or small plastic containers.
- Fill with water and freeze until solid.
- Once frozen, let kids melt the ice using:
  - Warm water
  - Squeeze bottles or droppers
- Bath play for added fun
- Encourage observation, fine motor skills, and sensory exploration!

BENEFITS:

- Boosts Curiosity – Sparks interest in science and change through observation.
- Supports Fine Motor Skills – Using droppers, spoons, or salt builds hand control.
- Encourages Sensory Play – Engages touch, sight, and temperature awareness.
- Promotes Problem-Solving – Kids figure out how to "rescue" the insects.
- Develops Language – Talking about melting, cold, and rescue builds vocabulary.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Change the Tools** – Use droppers, spoons, paintbrushes, or salt for melting.
- **Add Color** – Freeze insects in colored water for visual fun.
- **Make It a Race** – Time how fast kids can melt the ice.
- **Swap the Theme** – Try dinosaurs, animals, or letters instead of insects.
- **Try Different Temps** – Offer warm vs. cold water for experimentation.

SENSORY BAGS

WHATS NEEDED:

- Ziplock bags (strong and sealable)
- Hair gel, water, or baby oil (for filling)
- Small items (beads, buttons, foam shapes, glitter)
- Duct tape (to seal edges securely)
- Optional: Food colouring or themed items for added interest

WHAT TO DO:

- Fill a ziplock bag with gel, water, or oil.
- Add small items like beads, glitter, or foam shapes.
- Seal the bag tightly and reinforce with duct tape.
- Lay flat for squishing, pressing, and exploring.
- Always supervise during play.

BENEFITS:

- Enhances tactile exploration through squishing, pressing, and manipulating the bag
- Develops fine motor skills and hand strength
- Encourages focus and concentration during sensory play
- Supports early learning concepts like colors, letters, numbers, or shapes
- Promotes calm and self-regulation, especially for anxious or restless children



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children:** Use larger objects, simple textures, and fewer items for easier handling
- **For older children:** Add small, intricate items, multiple textures, or themed objects for complexity
- **Include tools:** Use spoons, tweezers, or rolling pins to explore the bag differently
- **Incorporate learning:** Add letters, numbers, or shapes for educational play
- **Themed variations:** Create seasonal, ocean, or animal sensory bags to engage imagination

STRESS BALL

WHATS NEEDED:

- Balloons
- Rice
- Funnel
- Googley eyes
- Pipe cleaners
- Coloured paper

WHAT TO DO:

- Gather balloons, funnel, and filler (flour, rice, etc.).
- Stretch balloon for easier filling.
- Fill using a funnel, then tie securely.
- Double-layer for strength.
- Let kids squeeze and explore.
- Supervise for safety.

BENEFITS:

- Helps relieve anxiety and stress
- Supports sensory regulation
- Improves hand strength and fine motor skills
- Encourages focus and calmness
- Provides tactile sensory input for self-soothing



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Change Textures** – Use different fillings like rice, flour, sand, or gel for sensory variety.
- **Cool Sensation** – Chill the ball in the fridge for a calming, cool touch.
- **Target Games** – Toss at targets to combine gross motor skills with stress relief.
- **Squeeze Challenges** – Encourage timed or patterned squeezes for coordination.
- **Emotion Play** – Draw faces on stress balls to support emotional expression.

POSTING & FINDING

WHATS NEEDED:

- Oats (sensory base)
- Shallow tray or container
- Small postable items (e.g., large buttons or wooden discs)
- Container with a slot
- Scoops or spoons
- Optional: tweezers or tongs for added challenge

WHAT TO DO:

- Fill the tray with oats and place the posting container nearby.
- Invite children to post the objects into the slot.
- Encourage them to search through the oats to find the hidden items.
- Use hands, scoops, or tools to retrieve the pieces and repeat.

BENEFITS:

- Strengthens fine motor skills and pincer grip
- Develops hand-eye coordination
- Encourages problem-solving and persistence
- Supports sensory regulation through tactile play
- Builds early math skills like counting and sorting
- Promotes focus and independent play



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children:** Use larger objects for easier grasping.
- **For older children:** Add counting challenges or color sorting tasks.
- **For extra fine motor work:** Use tweezers or tongs to retrieve items.
- **For themed learning:** Swap objects to match a theme (e.g., letters, numbers, animals, seasonal shapes).
- **For sensory preferences:** Substitute oats with rice, lentils, sand, or pom-poms.

MONSTER SCOOP & FEED

WHATS NEEDED:

- A monster cut-out with an open mouth (attached to a box or container)
- Sensory base (rice, oats, lentils, pasta, or pom-poms)
- Tray
- Scoops
- Optional: funnels, tongs, or measuring cups
- Mat

WHAT TO DO:

- Fill the tray with your chosen sensory base.
- Place the monster container nearby.
- Invite children to scoop the material and “feed” it into the monster’s mouth.
- Encourage repeated scooping, pouring, and refilling for extended play.
- Add simple challenges like “Feed the monster 5 scoops!”

BENEFITS:

- Develops fine motor skills and hand strength
- Improves hand-eye coordination
- Encourages focus and concentration
- Builds early math skills (counting, measuring)
- Supports sensory exploration and regulation
- Sparks imaginative play and storytelling



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children:** Use larger scoops and bigger sensory materials.
- **For older children:** Introduce counting tasks, color sorting, or timed challenges.
- **For extra fine motor work:** Use tongs or smaller spoons.
- **For themed learning:** Change the monster theme (hungry dinosaur, animal, seasonal character).
- **For sensory needs:** Swap bases to suit preferences (dry, soft, lightweight, or textured materials).

MOON & STAR SENSORY TRAY

WHATS NEEDED:

- A Tray
- Rice, sand, or oats as the base
- Moon and star cutouts (foam, paper, or plastic)
- Scoops, spoons, or small cups
- Optional: tweezers or small containers for sorting

WHAT TO DO:

- Fill the tray with rice or sand.
- Hide or scatter moon and star cutouts in the base.
- Invite children to scoop, search, and find the shapes.
- Encourage counting, sorting, or creating simple patterns.
- Repeat and explore different ways of scooping and transferring.

BENEFITS:

- Strengthens fine motor skills and coordination
- Encourages sensory exploration and regulation
- Builds early counting and sorting skills
- Develops focus and concentration
- Promotes imaginative and independent play



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children:** Use larger shapes and bigger scoops.
- **For older children:** Add counting challenges or color sorting tasks.
- **For sensory variation:** Dye the rice blue to create a “night sky” theme.
- **For literacy extension:** Add letter shapes to spell simple words.
- **For collaborative play:** Turn it into a timed “moon hunt” game.

PLAY DOUGH

WHATS NEEDED:

- Play dough,
- Tools
- Literally anything else

WHAT TO DO:

- Store-bought or homemade dough
- Include rollers, cutters, stamps, and safe utensils.
- Let kids squeeze, roll, flatten, and shape freely.
- Include Learning – Try shaping letters, numbers, or themed objects (animals, food, etc.).
- Play together or let kids collaborate to build social skills.
- Encourage responsibility by helping tidy up the area.

BENEFITS:

- Boosts hand-eye coordination through cutting and molding
- Helps ease tension, improve focus, and express emotions
- Encourages social interaction and cooperative play
- Supports learning of shapes, counting, and descriptive language
- Makes tricky subjects (like math or literacy) more engaging through hands-on play



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Give your child objects to make patterns in the playdough. A fork to make a dot pattern, a seashell, or make tracks with a toy car.
- Encourage imaginative play with muffin trays and pretend baking equipment. Pretend they are making a cake with the playdough.
- Give your child plastic animals to use with the playdough. Your child could make a lake for the ducks, or roll some playdough into balls to make apples for a horse.

WATER PLAY/MARK MAKING

WHATS NEEDED:

- Sponge (as tools)
- Sugar paper (Use washable or sugar paper to enhance visibility of marks.)
- Water

WHAT TO DO:

- Let your child explore water freely
- Encourage mark making on sugar paper with sponges, fingers, hands, or feet
- Supports creativity and sensory exploration
- Promotes gross motor development through full-body movement

BENEFITS:

- Enhances creativity and pre-writing skills
- Builds fine motor and coordination skills
- Encourages sensory exploration
- Teaches cause and effect
- Promotes focus and calm
- Sparks imaginative play

NOTES:

- Great for both fine and gross motor skill development.
- Encourage exploration with hands, feet, and tools like sponges or brushes.
- Ideal for indoor or outdoor sensory play with minimal cleanup.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Add sponges for squeezing, soaking, and splashing fun
- Colour the water with food coloring to make play more visually engaging
- Include toys like balls, rings, or plastic figures for imaginative and manipulative play
- Freeze water with objects or color to create an icy sensory experience
- Add a dish brush for pretend washing and role-play activities

SENSORY ACTIVITY BOOK

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Slow, calm sensory experiences for babies and young children

Using familiar, accessible materials