

Using Your Senses

You have probably noticed how curious your child is. He probably not only asks question after question, but he always touches things, looks into things, even smells things. He may notice tiny details on objects and enjoys unusual sounds. Your child uses all his senses to explore the world around him.

Your child's curiosity is fueled by explorations that cause him to use his senses. You can help him use his senses during play by providing what a variety of "sensory materials." These are items that stimulate several senses, especially the sense of touch. They are often sticky, messy, grainy, gooey, lumpy, or bumpy. Your child may need time to become familiar to the feel of unusual materials. He may not like the experience at all.

Sensory play has many benefits and it is worth the effort to encourage your child to explore a variety of sensory materials.

Suggestions for sensory materials

Place sensory materials in a shallow tub or plastic container on the floor or on a low table like a coffee table. A plastic box designed for storage under beds works well. Put an old sheet or shower curtain underneath to make clean up easy. Many sensory materials are everyday items that can be found around the house. Here are some suggestions:

Potting or garden soil. Provide small garden tools and plastic flowerpots, or a farm play set.

Sand, wet or dry. Add seashells, sand molds, or toy construction vehicles.

Snow in season. Too cold to go out? Bring some of the white stuff inside. Wear mittens.

Fall leaves. Great for the rustling sounds they make. Bring in several varieties and match colors and shapes.

Ice cubes. Scoops and plastic glasses make this a cool project.

Shaving cream. Put an unbreakable mirror or shiny cookie sheet in the bottom of the container and let your child "decorate" his face.

Water. This is something that is always on hand and kids love it! Provide plastic pitchers and cups for pouring. Investigate things that float and sink. Use your bathtub if you are concerned about the mess.

Dried beans, rice, or oatmeal. Provide scooping and pouring toys. Bury small toys for your child to find.

Cotton balls. These are soft and snuggly.

Sensational Play Dough

- 1 cup of flour
- ½ cup salt
- 1 cup of water
- 1 tablespoon cooking oil
- 2 teaspoons of cream of tartar
- 1 teaspoon powdered alum (optional)
- 2 packages unsweetened drink mix

Combine first six ingredients. Add the drink mix with the water. Cook over medium heat and stir until mixture forms a soft ball. Put dough on wax paper until cool enough to handle. Knead until smooth. Store in tightly covered container.

Parents,

This information is provided to you today on behalf of a special visiting program your care provider is taking part in. If you would like to receive similar visits and learn more about how your child grows and develops, please contact your local Parents as Teachers program or call 1-866-PAT4YOU to find a program in your area, or visit our website at www.patnc.org

