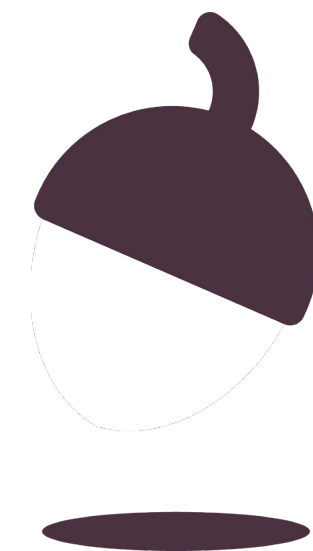


Speech and Language Therapy

# Sensory Play

## Lesson number 2 of 14 on Interaction and Communication

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ACADEMY



# Sensory or Messy Play

All children learn through play. There are many different sorts of play.

Messy play is a fun and interesting way for children to explore and learn about the world around them.

A wide range of materials can be used for messy play, including:

- paint;
- play dough;
- water;
- sand;
- pasta;
- paper;
- rice;
- bubbles;
- shaving foam;
- jelly;
- baby oil or lotion;
- cornflour.



# Activity 1

Aim - To confidently explore hard and dry materials

## What you will need

The child's favourite small toys – for example, a car, ball, train, toy figure, animal figures, dry sand or shredded paper

## What to do

1. You should show the child the toys you are going to hide in the sand or paper.
2. Then search for each toy.
3. Use simple language such as 'Where's car?'
4. When you find the toy, use an excited voice to say what you found.
5. Encourage your child to join in. Never force the child to touch the sand or paper, but follow the above steps along the way.
6. Go at the child's pace. Finish the activity before the child loses interest or gets distressed.



# Steps along the way (1)...

1. The child watches you find the toys
2. The child holds your arm while they find the toys
3. The child directs your hand to find the toys or uses a tool (for example, a spade)
4. The child takes a toy that you have found
5. The child takes out toys that they have partly hidden on their own
6. The child takes out toys that they have fully hidden on their own

## Words you can use during play

- Names of objects

Sand, car, ball, train, cow, dinosaur, hands, fingers

- Action words

Hiding, finding, digging, feeling, searching, pouring, picking up, dropping

- Descriptive words

Hard, soft, gritty, dry, gone, cold



# Ways you can help Stage 1 Sensory Play

To make the activity  
**easier..**

- Do not rush through the steps.
- Use a shallow tray and large toys.
- Get brothers and sisters involved.
- Use tools to pick up the toys (for example, a spoon, spade or tongs).

To make the activity  
**harder..**

- Increase the number of toys you hide.
- Bury the toys deeper or make the container larger.
- Increase the number of other children joining in the activity.

**Other** activities...

- Making faces using dry foods or materials and a glue stick
- Handling pretend plastic food and real food that is hard and dry (for example, unpeeled carrots, potatoes, apples, bananas)
- Putting hard and dry objects into feely bags
- Treasure hunts



# Activity 2

Aim - To confidently explore soft and textured materials

## What you will need

Texture books (you can make these yourself or buy them), vegetable or sponge shapes, paint in shallow trays

## What to do

1. Show the child the materials and demonstrate how the activity works.
2. Use simple language such as 'in paint', 'press shape', 'made pattern' or 'ahh, soft, furry cat, and rough crocodile'.
3. Encourage your child to join in.
4. Never force the child to touch the textures, but follow the steps along the way.
5. Go at the child's pace.
6. Finish the activity before the child loses interest or gets distressed.



## Steps along the way (2)...

1. The child watches you print or touch textures
2. The child holds your arm while you print or touch textures
3. The child directs your hand to print or touch textures
4. The child presses or takes away the vegetable or sponge to print, or turns a page of the book
5. The child uses a clean vegetable or sponge to print, or touches some textures in the book
6. The child uses any vegetable or sponge to print more than once, or touches all the textures in the book

### Words you can use during play

- Names of objects

Paint, potato, carrot, pepper, broccoli, sponge, star, cotton reel, book, page

- Action words

Feeling, touching, printing, pressing, looking, turning, squeezing, stroking, rubbing

- Descriptive words

Furry, shiny, smooth, rough, bumpy, warm, cold, squashy, squishy,, fast, slow, soft, hard, gently



# Ways you can help Stage 2 Sensory Play

To make the activity  
**easier..**

- Do not rush through the steps.
- Use larger printing materials, and small paint trays.
- Get brothers and sisters involved.

To make the activity  
**harder..**

- Use smaller printing materials and larger, deeper paint trays.
- Use feely bags, with pieces of different material to find in it.
- Increase the number of other children joining in the activity.

**Other** activities...

- Finger painting
- Hiding objects in cooked rice, pasta or wet sand
- Cooking activities (for example, using spoons and whisks)
- Putting paint in trays, and pushing cars or balls in it
- Mixing cooked spaghetti with paint for printing
- Making shapes in play dough using cutters
- Painting marbles using tongs





# Activity 3

Aim - To confidently explore wet and sticky materials

## What you will need

Cornflour in a tray, lolly sticks, twigs, toy cutlery

## What to do

1. Show the child the materials and how to use them.
2. Use simple language such as 'make pattern', 'fingers sticky', 'drip drip', 'watch me', 'all gone' and 'take more'.
3. Encourage your child to join in.
4. Never force the child to touch the textures, but follow steps along the way.
5. Go at the child's pace. Finish the activity before the child loses interest or gets distressed.



## Steps along the way (3)...

1. The child watches you explore the texture
2. The child holds your arm while you explore the texture
3. The child directs your hand to explore the texture
4. The child uses a tool to explore the texture on their own
5. The child uses their own fingers to explore the texture on their own
6. The child uses their whole hands to explore the texture on their own

### Words you can use during play

- Names of objects

Cornflour, stick, twig, knife, fork, spoon

- Action words

Feeling, touching, pressing, looking, cutting, squeezing, drawing, pulling, pushing, swirling, falling, dripping, grabbing, letting go, dribbling

- Descriptive words

Slippery, wet, shiny, smooth, warm, cold, squashy, squishy, fast, slow, soft, hard, sticky, messy, funny, pattern, gone, disappear, more



# Ways you can help Stage 3 Sensory Play

To make the activity  
**easier..**

- Do not rush through the steps.
- Use a small tray.
- Get brothers and sisters involved.

To make the activity  
**harder..**

- Only use hands, and use both hands.
- Use a larger tray and add colour.
- Increase the number of other children involved.

**Other** activities...

- Making faces on paper plates or a collage using different textures
- Using fingers instead of glue spreaders
- Putting foam in a tray • Cooking activities  
(for example, making fairy cakes) • Mixing paint with sand and glitter



# More information about the Stages of Sensory or Messy Play

Messy play has to be introduced **gradually**. We need to be very aware of the child's reaction to different textures.

This is to make sure that the child does not come across textures they don't like, which may lead them to resisting and becoming more sensitive to texture. It is also important that we show the child that **we enjoy messy play** and this will encourage the child to enjoy it too.

Messy play can be divided into **three stages**. It is important to identify the stage the child is at and work through that stage towards the next.



# Stage 1 - Dry and Hard Textures

This involves giving the child opportunities to investigate materials that are hard and dry. This stage is comfortable for most children as many have experienced these textures around them already.

Some materials you could use are:

- dry rice;
- dry pasta;
- beans (not kidney beans) dried peas, pulses or lentils;
- sand;
- tinsel;
- shredded paper;
- crunched up paper;
- chalk;
- sequins;
- pebbles or stones;
- crayons, pencils or pens;
- sawdust; or
- cereal.



## Stage 2 - Soft Textures

This is play that uses materials with a soft texture. Wet materials can be put into zip lock bags or covered with cling film to reduce the effect of the materials and make it easier for children who are sensitive to new textures to start handling them. Make sure these bags are sealed and do not leak.

Some materials you could use for soft texture play are:

- cooked pasta, including spaghetti;
- bread dough;
- play dough;
- wet sand;
- squishy balls;
- soft materials (for example, fur or velvet);
- sponges;
- balloons; or
- bags of different materials (for example, gel, shaving foam or wet cornflakes).



# Stage 3 - Soft and Wet Textures

This is messy play that involves materials that are soft, wet and really messy. Children may take some time to work up to this stage. You may need to ease a child into these types of activities and be aware of them resisting or becoming sensitive towards certain textures. Always show your child that you are enjoying the experience of handling the materials even if this is difficult for you.

Some materials you could use are:

- paint;
- cornflour;
- water;
- shaving foam;
- baby oil or baby lotion;
- wet mud;
- bubbles;
- papier mâché;
- food; or
- glue.





# Helping the child to enjoy Sensory or Messy Play

- Introduce messy-play activities gradually. Give the child time to work through one stage for some time before moving on.
- Join in. Children look to adults as their role models. If you give it a try, this will give them confidence and they are more likely to follow your example.
- As well as setting aside some time for specific activities, try to include messy play in everyday life, such as cooking, gardening and bath time.
- Make sure that you provide enough time and space for your child to enjoy the activity. Try and allow the child to decide how long to play for. This will be shown by their interest and concentration.
- Never force sensory play. Encouraging others e.g. siblings to join in too, the child will be able to observe what is happening and be more willing to explore.
- Allow the child to direct the activity and explore themselves.
- Dress for mess by wearing aprons – old shirts are great as they cover a big area. Put newspaper or wipe-clean mats on the floor.
- You may have to introduce activities gradually, but they should always be available throughout the activity so the child can choose when to join in.
- When providing an activity, make sure it is appropriate for your child's needs and at the right level. You should work through levels gradually – jumping to a higher level when a child is not ready can make them resist activities later.





# Recording and Reflecting Task

Let’s sing round and round the garden a few times and ..

- vary the tickle e.g. under the chin or behind the ear
- vary the time you leave between one step two step
- Introduce an object (for example a puppet or teddy bear)

This is a great time for you to observe, wait and respond to what your child likes.

Attempt	Variation	Comments
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

In one sentence, what did you notice?

When I.....

my child.....



# Recording and Reflecting on Sensory Play

Use this sheet to record and reflect on your childs stages and progress within sensory play.

In one sentence, what have you noticed this week?

When I.....

my child.....

Date	Activity	Comments



# Sensory Play Time Diary

Date:

We learnt about

When my adult

I...

Insert picture

