

sensory play workshop

When you provide your little learners with play experiences that ignite the senses of touch, taste, smell, sound and sight, you're doing sensory play! It's the foundation of a lifetime of scientific understandings and it encourages your child to make sense of the world around them by exploring with their senses.

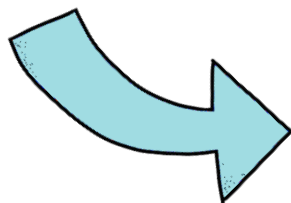
WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- A toddler pouring and transferring materials is developing hand-eye coordination and early mathematical terms such as empty and full
- Babies exploring new textures such as mashed potato are developing their fine motor skills and object permanence as they drop food to the floor
- Oral language and vocabulary can also be developed as you talk with your child as they play and asking questions like 'What does it taste like?'
- Creativity is developed as you engage in sensory art invitations using finger paints, play dough and edible paint

SENSORY PLAY ESSENTIALS:

- An old bedsheet to catch spills
- A tub to hold the sensory base
- Sensory base
- Utensils

An old bed sheet is perfect for catching all of the spills that happen during a play session. This helps make clean up time much easier and defines the play space for your little learners.



SENSORY TUBS

A large shallow tub or tray will help contain the mess too! A large underbed storage tub is perfect because the sides are high enough to contain the little bits and pieces, but not too high that your child can't reach in easily to play. Pop the tub down on a sheet or up on a table outside so your child can stand to play.

We also have a Tuff Tray (or Active World Tray) which we often use outside. They are great for outside messy play but it certainly isn't a necessity. In fact, we don't use ours anywhere near as much as I thought we would.



In the past, we've used baking trays from the kitchen, [TROFAST](#) tubs from IKEA (pictured to the left) and the beautiful [metal trays](#) from Kmart. The tub isn't important though – it just serves as a base for your play and helps to keep some of the mess contained a little.

SENSORY UTENSILS

These are some of the most common items that we add to our sensory tubs and most of these you probably have in your kitchen or pantry right now!

- A set of measuring cups and measuring spoons
- Scoops (save the scoops from your washing powder and laundry powder too)
- Tongs and tweezers
- Syringes and medicine dispensers
- Different sized and shaped bowls, containers and jars
- Funnels



Here are a list of some of my favourite shops to buy sensory utensils from:

- The Creative Toy Shop – [Fine Motor Set](#)* [Sorting Bowls](#)*
- Works at Play – [Potion Pots](#)
- Growing Kind – [Small Wooden Scoops](#)* [Wooden Scoop Set](#)* [Water Scoops](#)*
- The Reject Shop and any other dollar shop. Check out the kitchen aisle for a huge range of utensils perfect for sensory play!

SENSORY BASES

You'll find recipes and more in my new [Sensory Play Book](#) but here are some bases that are perfect for fuss-free play. You can add these to a sensory tray with some simple utensils like measuring cups, spoons and funnels!

- Water
- Rice
- Pasta
- Split peas
- Chickpeas
- Polenta
- Dried beans
- Oats
- Cereal
- Bird seed
- Pom poms
- Beads



Remember that many of these bases can be stored in a sandwich bag and reused over and over! [Click here](#) to find a quick and easy recipe for making coloured beans!

RAINBOW RICE

First, add 1 cup of rice into a sandwich bag and then add a tablespoon (roughly) of vinegar. Next, add a splash of food colouring – more makes a more vibrant colour. Close the bag and shake it around to disperse the colour. Pour out onto a baking sheet to dry in the sun and then add to a tray with some measuring cups spoons and funnels ready to explore! Add it to a bag to use again another day!

WATER SENSORY TUB

Add some water to a sensory tub and add a drop of blue food colouring. Add an aquarium plant and some ocean animals (ours are from Mini Zoo). This is the perfect starter small world for your toddler to explore! You could just add some measuring cups instead or try different themes with different coloured water or animals.

CONSTRUCTION TUB

We're adding some polenta, dirt from the garden or some sand! Next, we add some construction trucks and some branches and other natural loose parts from the garden or the park. You can set this up in advance and present them or get them to set it up themselves. This is great for building their vocabulary! You might even like to just take your construction trucks outside into the garden!

SENSORY PLAY FOR YOUR OTHER SENSES

Sensory tubs are just the beginning! Our little learners love to touch and look as they explore but here are some ideas for the sense of smell, sound and taste.

- Smell – Add some essential oils to your homemade play dough. Make a batch of lavender rice by adding a few drops of lavender essential oils and dried lavender pieces. Go on a nature hunt and search for some smelly flowers.
- Sound – Set up some pots and pans to make music with. Make your own homemade musical instruments. Listen to music while you paint.
- Taste – Taste-safe bases are perfect for younger children. Lilly always gravitated to these when we went to sensory playgroup as a toddler. Some of her favourites were dry cereal and construction vehicles or some blue jelly and ocean animal toys.

