



What is Sensory Play?

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What is sensory play?

Sensory play is any activity that stimulates at least one of your child's senses. This could be **hearing, sight, touch, smell or taste**. It also includes play that involves movement or balance.

You might have seen other parents using [play dough](#), [cold pasta](#) or [making their own sensory box](#). But sensory play can be a lot simpler than that.

[Painting with your fingers](#), [splashing in the bath](#) and even [jumping in piles of leaves](#) during a trip to the park are also examples of sensory play.

It doesn't even have to be something that you need to think about too much. "Babies, from when they are very little, are already using all of their senses to investigate and explore their environment.

"So it's something that children naturally do without parents having to set it up. What we can do, is make sure we allow and encourage our children to keep exploring using all their senses."

What age can you start sensory play?

From the moment they're born, your baby is ready for sensory play.

Even in the womb, your baby uses their senses to understand the world. By the time they are born, they'll already be able to [recognise your voice](#) and your smell.

With a new born, sensory play can be as simple as [blowing raspberries on their tummy](#), gently tickling or [massaging them](#), or just [chatting about the world when you're out for a walk](#). As babies get older, you will find that these activities develop naturally.

The more they grow, the more their sensory play will adapt.

Maybe you've been playing [peek-a-boo](#) with your baby, and they've enjoyed feeling the cloth on their face. But now they've got a bit too old for that, so they might start doing something different with the cloth.

They might start putting it over both of you at once, and you can change up the activity by letting different amounts of light in, lifting or lowering the cloth, so they experience dark and light."

The more they grow, the more their sensory play will adapt. "So you want to keep following your child's lead in the play. If they get bored of a certain type of sensory play, they'll soon start exploring it differently."

What are the benefits of sensory play?

"It's through all of our senses that we make links between what we see, what we feel and what we hear. And this, ultimately, helps our children to make sense of the world."

Exploring the world through their senses can help children understand lots of different things, such as **"cause and effect"** (how their actions affect the world) and to develop their emotional awareness.

Through sensory play, some children will discover which senses are more calming for them. For some, it's music. For some, it's a more tactile feeling, like being wrapped in a blanket. Then for others, it's having certain smells around them. Understanding what soothes you is a really useful skill for children to have as they grow up.

Sensory play also helps your little one's attention span. When a child is hands-on with an experience, they'll stay engaged with it for longer than if they just listen to someone talking.

How does it help with language learning?

Sensory play helps your child's language learning too, as linking experiences with their senses helps children to remember the words that went with them.

"If you were asked to think of a swimming pool, you would probably think about the smell of the chlorine, the heat of the room and the sound reverberating around the pool."