

Play is the key way children learn about themselves, others and the world they live in. It is essential to their learning, development, health, and physical, mental and social well-being – and it's FUN! Play provides the building blocks to be ready for school.



Sensory Play

Messy sensory play, like slime, ooblec, kinetic sand or mud play, are very popular activities for playgroup.

They're great for children's sensory exploration, and there are more hands on-deck to help clean up afterwards!

Did you know?

Children may be more willing to have a go when they see their friends trying and enjoying new sensory experiences. A healthy diet of sensory play experiences is vital to healthy early childhood and brain development.

Other development

Sensory play in a group gives lots of social experiences and is fun to do together! It can also provide fine motor opportunities. Try hiding plastic animals in sand, tubs of coloured rice, or shaving cream; or looking for "spaghetti worms" in a tray of dirt with large tweezers and magnifying glasses.

Variations

Try adding a gentle essential oil such as lavender or orange to the next batch of playdough your playgroup makes. Just be sure to check for any allergies or sensitivities playgroup families may have. Warm playdough with a beautiful smell is very engaging!



Sensory play isn't just about touch, taste, smell... Games like 3-legged races, animal walks e.g. crab walking, or obstacle courses are fun activities for playgroup that not only burn off some energy but are great for getting some extra sensory input for body movement and position systems.

Making and playing with simple musical instruments is also sensory play.

Create a sensory garden at playgroup or get the playgroup involved in a local community garden.

- Playgroup WA has a treasure trove of play activities for babies, toddlers and 3-5 year olds, for home and playgroup. These play activities cover a balanced diet of play across sensory, movement, language and thinking skill areas.

You can find them at www.playgroupwa.com.au/playideas or visit www.facebook.com/playgroupwa

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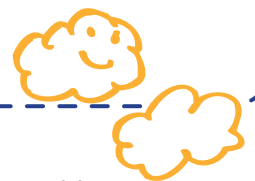


Sensory Play continued...

Some children have difficulty taking in and responding to information from their senses. For some children, a little bit of sensory stimulation feels like a LOT and they can get overwhelmed. For some children, a lot of sensory stimulation feels very little and they take a long time to respond or need the play to be bigger or louder. At playgroup, you might notice differences in children's reactions to sensory play. Sometimes children's meltdowns can just be because their sensory system is overloaded.

Playgroups can be busy places and provide lots of sensory input. This may be a little overwhelming for some children (and adults!) A tent, bean bag or cushion filled cubby in a quiet corner of the room can be a great space for children to escape to when they need. Try adding some books or quiet toys.

This may help children to feel more comfortable, learn to self-regulate (manage feelings, energy levels and behaviour), and help families to feel welcome and perhaps stay a little longer at playgroup.



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