

Help! My child doesn't like toys!

Sensory play activities you can offer your child



First
things
first

It's important to consider the following strategies when your child plays with toys:

- **Reducing how many toys there are:** some children may be overwhelmed by the choice of toys on offer and therefore may look like they are not interested. Try reducing the choices to 2-3 (or less if this is still too much) and see how your child responds.
- **Ensure toys are motivating:** think about the types of toys on offer, have you noticed a pattern in which toys your child will play with and which they won't? For example, some children are only motivated by toys with lights, or toys that make a sound. Observe how your child plays and see if you can identify what types of toys they engage with.
- **Follow their lead in play:** watch and wait to see how your child likes to play with toys. You can then join in their play by copying sounds and actions.

What is sensory play?

Sensory play focusses on stimulating any of the five senses through play (i.e. touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing). Sensory play does not always require lots of fancy materials or steps and can be introduced at home using everyday household objects and materials.

How is it useful?

- It's key for children's development – exploring different senses can help develop children's brains and learn about their environment.
- It's motivating - some children are not motivated by traditional toys, particularly children who may have social communication difficulties or Autism. Children need to be motivated in order to engage in play for longer periods of time and interact with others.
- It's calming – for some children, sensory activities can help them regulate their emotions and energy.
- It's stimulating – for other children, sensory activities can help them boost their energy and engagement.

FAQ:

- 1) **Will my child learn to play with toys?** – It's difficult to determine how your child's play skills will develop. However, sensory play has many benefits to brain and play development. It's also important to remember that we all have our preferences and therefore some children may continue to be motivated by sensory play rather than toys.
- 2) **Will it be messy?** – Maybe. Creating a mess can be frustrating, however, it is okay to get a little messy. You can make adjustments at home to minimise the mess e.g. water play in the bath or flour play in a tray.

Sensory activity ideas

Soapy Water Play

- You need
 - Container
 - Water
 - Dish soap
 - Straws, bowls, spoons (whatever else you can think of to play with water)
- Allow your child to splash, tip, play with the water however they wish.



Rice Play

- Colour the rice with food colouring or just plain
- Add spoons, pots, pans, colanders etc.
- Great for scooping and pouring and measuring



Jelly on a Plate

- Hide some toys in jelly and let them dig them out
- OR use jelly granules with a small amount of water to create a paste – you've got jelly paint and let them paint on paper



Oats or cereal Play

- A box or tray of oats or dry cereal can provide a fab dry play material
- Add trucks and diggers and it can become a building site - pour water in too and start mixing up some 'concrete'



Gloop

- Mix cornflour and water – super simple to make easy slime to play with.

Cloud dough

- Grab some flour and add some veg oil
- Mix with your fingers to achieve a crumbly mouldable texture and play
- You can add cocoa powder to make it look like mud
- You can also add scents to the dough using essential oils for added sensory fun.

Flour

- Have a tray or space to play with flour
- You can pretend it's snowy scene or a snow storm
- You can make piles of flour and knock them down
- You can make marks, draw patterns, write your initials etc.



🎨 Drawing with chalk

- You can buy cheap, chunky chalk in bargain shops. Your child will enjoy chalking pavements, the driveway, walls, fences or bricks. They'll also like watching rain wash away their designs.

🎪 Jumping fun

- There are many great ways to incorporate jumping movements — jump ropes, small exercise trampolines, sitting on an exercise ball.
- Set up an obstacle course that challenges your child one to climb and jump over small objects on their way. You can do this outside with sidewalk chalk and small rocks or toys or inside using blankets, pillows, and stuffed animals as obstacles and paths.



🔊 Sound tube

- You need
 - Containers
 - Materials that can make a sound in the container e.g. bells, coins, shredded paper, rocks
- You can make these sound tubes yourself and introduce them to your child to shake and listen to. You may want to make the sound tube with your child if this is appropriate.



💃 Dance party

- Put on your child's favourite music or play some music that matches their mood (e.g. calming music, fun pop music etc.).
- Allow your child to move to the music how they want and join in
- You can show them new ways to 'dance' to the music e.g. swaying, jumping, shaking your arms etc.
- You can use ripped paper streams, feathers, hula hoop, balloons during your dance to add some extra sensory fun!

🍷 Fruit teabag painting

- Offer a range of fruit tea bags (make sure they have cooled down).
- On a thick piece of paper, you child can paint and draw using the teabags by moving them around the paper.

