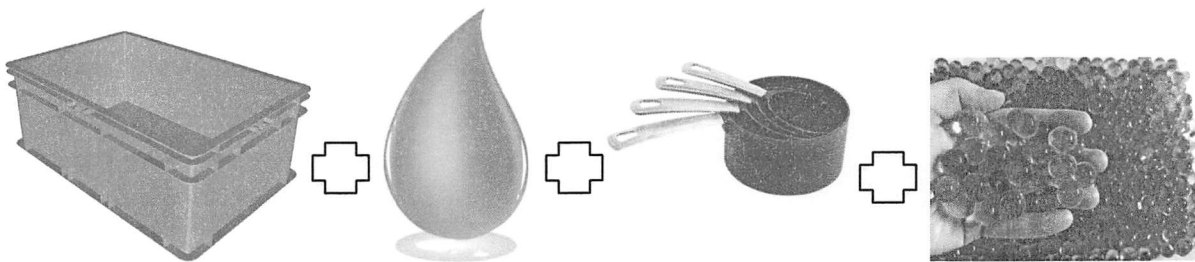


# SENSORY BINS



## Why Make a Sensory Bin?

For your child to be a scientist who uses all of their senses to answer their questions about the world: Grabbing, smelling, licking, listening, staring, rubbing etc.

Fine motor development: picking up and manipulating small objects with fingers, hands or tools

Transferring: moving objects between hands or from one container to another i.e. pouring and scooping

Matching: Colours, shapes, objects, themes etc.

Patterns: Making patterns with objects that are in the bin i.e. big, small, big, small etc.

Counting

Sorting and Classifying: Small objects in the bin with the tools provided

Emotional regulation: Can be used as a calming activity for children with a lot of energy or sensory seeking behaviours. Many children can benefit from playing in the bin before tasks that require more concentration or stillness like dinner time, table tasks (colouring, letter practice etc.) or even bedtime.

OR

For the child that is still feeling 'blue' or sad after a tantrum or fight with a parent or sibling. Why not use the sensory bin as an opportunity to repair the relationship by getting the sibling or yourself on the floor with the child and play in a sensory bin together until you are both back to your normal, calm selves and laughing together.

Sensory bins are a great way for children or siblings with an age gap to play and learn together. For example a four year old sibling can be learning their colours, shapes and counting while their 2 year old sibling is practicing fine motor control and exploring how the materials feel in their hands and fit into different containers.

## **Close Supervision is required**

### **The Three Parts of a Sensory Bin**

1. The Base
2. The Tools
3. The Fun Extras

**Remember:** If you have an older baby or toddler who is still mouthing toys/objects then we recommend using either no base, shredded paper or dry cereal (if your child is old enough). Otherwise small pieces will be a **choking hazard**. Also, you need to use large items for the tools/extras and remember to supervise your child closely while they play with the sensory bin.

### **Set The Bin on a Blanket and Teach Your Child The Two Rules:**

1. Keep it on the blanket.
2. Do not throw.

### **Ideas for the Base:**

Popcorn kernels  
Cooked pasta (cold or warm)  
Uncooked pasta (different shapes ie. alphabet shapes)  
Rice  
Dyed the rice  
Scented rice  
Coins  
Cotton balls  
Pom poms  
Rocks  
Nuts  
Shells  
Pinecones  
Leaves  
Grass  
Marbles  
Water  
Snow  
Sand or coloured craft sand  
Birdseed  
Jello  
Flour  
Aquarium rocks  
Dried beans, peas or lentils  
Regular beans, peas or lentils  
Easter 'grass'

Flower petals (real or silk)  
Buttons  
Tinsel  
Styrofoam  
Shredded paper  
Paper scraps (or cut into shapes)  
Fake snow  
Oats  
Cereal  
Dry dog food  
Gravel  
Leaves  
Fabric scraps  
Lengths of ribbon  
Buttons  
Beads  
Jigsaw puzzle pieces  
Playdough  
Water Beads  
Shaving Cream

**Ideas for the Tools:**

Cupcake liners  
Ice cube trays  
Muffin tins  
Egg cartons  
Small bowls  
Measuring cups  
Drinking cups  
Measuring spoons  
Different size spoons or forks  
Tongs  
Chop sticks  
Funnels  
Bottles

**Ideas for the Fun Extras:**

Some parents like to add the extras based on a theme; for example- colour, shapes, construction, princesses, animals, vacation or pirates.  
Board game pieces  
Toy animals  
Action figures  
Legos  
Hair Clips

Popsicle sticks  
Magnets  
Pom poms  
Foam stickers  
Buttons  
Beads  
Costume jewelry  
Pine cones  
Pipe cleaners  
Feathers  
Fabric scraps  
Hot wheel cars  
Jingle bells  
Silk flowers

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### **\*Indoor Activity Ideas for Preschoolers\***

**Indoor racetrack:** Draw a track for children to race toy cars or themselves around; on butcher-block paper or taped-together newspapers

**Pom Pom Scavenger Hunt:** Spread colourful Pom Poms around the house, give your children buckets and let them run all around collecting them. Then, do it again!

**Hide and Go Seek:** One person ("It") covers his or her eyes and counts aloud while the other players hide. When "It" is finished counting, he or she begins looking for the hiders. The last hider to be found is the next "It."

**Lilly Pad Jumping:** Space the couch cushions/pillows around on the floor of a room or down a hallway. Then join your child in jumping from cushion to cushion, over and over and over again 😊

**Indoor Hopscotch:** Use tape on the floor to create hopscotch for your children to run and jump in all winter long.

**Jumping and Toss Targets:** Use tape on the floor to create square shapes for you and your child to jump between or use bean bags (or balls, stuffed animals, figurines etc.) to aim and throw into these targets.

**Rolling and Throwing Balls:** A great way to work on coordination. You can set up boxes to aim for; the child can throw, roll or kick the ball into the boxes (especially if some of the boxes are lying on their sides). The softer the balls, the less damage to indoor décor and spectators.

**Activity Songs:** Sing songs that have actions with your children, for example: 'Going on a Bear Hunt', 'Ring Around the Rosie', 'If You're Happy And You Know It', 'The Itsy Bitsy Spider' etc. Don't hesitate to exaggerate the actions to full-body movements to increase the energy the child and you burn.

**Balance Challenge:** Use tape on the floor to create a line or zig zag pattern to have your child walk along. Then challenge them to hop, skip, run, crawl and crab walk along the same line.

**Animal Walks:** Using stuffed animals or animal pictures from books, puzzles or picture cards to choose which animal to imitate- then walk, talk and play together like those animals. Then, choose another animal and then another!

**Red Light, Green Light:** The goal is to get from one end of the room to the other. They can move forward when the person in charge (who stands at the end of the room everyone else is trying to reach) says “green light” and stop when they say “red light”. This works best if you have a large room or a long hallway.

**Stuffed Animal Run/ Hurdles:** In a circle-shaped track or line formation, spread stuffed animals out. Then join your children in hopping over the stuffed animals to race ‘around the track’.

**Duck, Duck, Goose:** One child is ‘It’, the other children sit on the floor in a circle. The ‘It’ child walks around the circle and touches each child on the head, saying “duck” each time. When ‘It’ is ready to run, ‘It’ says “goose” as he touches a head. The person who is tagged jumps up and chases the ‘It’ child around the circle trying to tap the other child before they sit down in the circle where the ‘goose’ was sitting.

**Balloon Volleyball:** Using tape or yarn on the floor to create a line that will be the ‘net’. Have the children divide into two groups, standing on each side of the ‘net’. Then let them bat the balloons back and forth over the ‘net’ without the balloons hitting the group.

**Balloon Table Tennis:** Using smaller balloons, tape the yarn across the middle of a kitchen or dining room table. Let the children use fans made out of construction paper or paper plates to blow or hit the balloons back and forth to ‘score points’.

**Fruit Bowling:** Use foam/paper/plastic cups or empty bottles as bowling pins. Set these up at the end of a hallway or long room. Give the children a bowl of road fruits and let them try rolling the fruit at the 'pins' to knock them down. Encourage the kids to set the pins back up themselves too.

**Letters and Numbers:** Have a child or group of children form letters and numbers with their bodies. Some children may require a picture of the letter/number to look at. They can sit, stand or lie on the floor; bending and stretching as needed. Maybe two children could work together to make the larger letters!

Extra fun: playing this game in a darkened room and then using a flashlight behind the children so they can observe their shadows on the wall (with standing poses only).

**Mother May I:** Start with one of the adults being 'mother' but then make sure each child gets to take a turn as well. The kid whose turn it is gets to ask to move across the floor. Instead of saying 'mother' they say the person's actual name. They might ask to hop, jump, skip, gallop, tip toe walk, backwards walk, bear walk, crab walk, somersault (forward rolling) and crawl (to name a few). The adult or child who was playing 'mother' responded back 'yes (kids name) you may!' They had a blast checking out the different ways to get across the room as well as loving the fact that they got to request what they were doing.

**Indoor T-Ball:** Using a t-ball stand, large plastic bat and foam ball, let the kids try to hit the ball. Then, using pillows or tape to mark bases, have the children 'run the bases' after hitting the ball. Challenge the kids to try 'running' the bases a different way each time ie. Crawl, skip, crab walk etc. Of course, cheering and high fives are a great way to welcome a child back to home base when they are get back to the home plate.

**Freeze Dancing:** The children dance around to their favorite music and when the music stops that have to 'freeze' and stay still until the music begins again.

**Statue Dancing:** The children freeze when the music stops. Then, everyone counts to 3 together and they are each 'blown each other over' and all fall down on the floor. Then the music begins and they dance again.

**Marching Band:** Hand out musical instruments, turn on some music and have fun! To mix it up you can instruct 'the band' to take big or small steps, move fast or slowly, backwards or forwards. Each child can take a turn being the leader!

**Simon Says:** Take turns being Simon and try and use so big and fast movements that will burn off lots of energy.

**Transportation Game:** Put chairs in a row, each kid sits in a chair and everyone pretends that they are on a plane, row boat, train etc. Use big movements with the arms and legs to act out each different mode of transportation.

**Run for Colours:** Put out a box or pile of colored blocks on one end of the room and put colored scraps of paper in a bag for drawing on the other end of the room. Kids draw and run to retrieve the matching color. Then they add it to the stack until they finally the blocks "all fall down."

**Four Corners:** Create fun signs for each corner of the room like rain forest or dessert or pizza palace or ice cream shop and divide the kids among the corners. Hold up a sign with a child's name and name a corner for them to run to. This works on name recognition while letting those legs stretch too.

**Treasure Hunt:** Hide ten small objects, such as blocks, or toy cars, around the house. Send your child on a treasure hunt to see if he or she can find them. Write a list of items and read them to your children one at a time. Things like puzzle pieces, utensils, crayons, or books with specific pictures on the cover are some ideas to start.



**Hot Potato:** Ask the kids to sit on the floor in a circle. Turn on some tunes and have them pass the potato (a bean bag or soft ball) around the circle as fast as they can. When the music stops, the player holding the potato spins in a circle three times before sitting back down to play again.

**Bubbles:** You need a plate and straw for each player, some dishwashing soap and water. Place a dime-size drop of dish soap at the centre of each plate. Pour a little water onto the plate and gently mix with the dish soap until some suds start to form. Have the kids place the straw in the suds and blow very gently.

**Sock Basketball:** All you need is a bucket and a rolled up pair of socks. Each player takes a turn at throwing the sock-ball into the bucket. When a player scores a bucket, he or she takes a step back and throws again until missing.

**Balloon bounce.** Blow up a few balloons and toss them into the air. It's up to the children to gently bat them higher as they fall so the balloons don't touch the floor. You can encourage the kids to move around more by tapping some of the balloons yourself so they cover a wider area of the room. Do not leave young children unattended with balloons. When they pop, they can become a choking hazard.

#### **How to Get Moving but Stay Indoors:**

Think about heading to...

**Indoor playgrounds or activity centers.**

**Indoor swimming pools.** Local recreation centers may offer inexpensive classes for kids as young as preschool age.

**Kid gym classes.**

**Bowling.** Find out if your local lanes have bumpers for the little ones.

## **Equipment to Consider for Staying Active in Your Own Home:**

### **Exercise Trampoline**

These can be used inside, outside, in the garage--wherever. There are options that use bungee cables and elastic bands, not springs, so there is less risk of accidents. Your hyper toddler can now meet all of his jumping needs without doing any damage.

### **Basketball Hoop**

You can use it inside or outside, because it is small and made of plastic. If your toddler likes to throw, give him an appropriate object and target!

### **Sit N Spin**

Your toddler can spin himself silly while enjoying the sounds (and possibly lights).

### **Push and Pull Toy**

If your toddler is running all over the place, give him a 'heavier' push or pull; toy. There are various push toys out there, most of them quite affordable. You can also let him push a box around. Filling the toy or box with something to weight it down will also help calm him more quickly. He can also pull around the weighted box or a wagon of toys. Push toys can be used outside as well.

### **Cars & Tricycles**

Even in a small room toddlers have fun driving these, and of course they are fun outdoors, too.

### **Slides, Swings & More**

These can be used indoors or outdoors and will give your toddler a healthy way to release her energy.

### **Bean Bag**

Children can sit snugly, jump onto, crash into, roll and push these around and sometimes throw it (a very short distance).

### **Inflatable Toys**

Most Jump Houses are small enough for indoor use and sturdy enough for outdoor use. Best of all, when you're done playing, you can deflate them and put them away!

### **Tents & Tunnels**

A tunnel gives a child a safe alternative to your child crawling under all your tables/furniture. A tent does not help the toddler release energy but does give the child a safe and quiet place to crash when he is tired or overwhelmed from the day.

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