

### What is sensory play?

Sensory play, also called “messy play”, is play which stimulates a child’s senses; sight, sound, smell, touch, taste and also their physical development. Some examples of sensory play include dry rice, dry pasta, cereal and jelly.... the list is endless!

### How does sensory play build language?

Playing with different textures, tasting and smelling objects will allow your child will build up new ways of talking about the world around them. For example water doesn’t have to be just wet, talk to your child about how it feels – is it slippery? Is it bubbly? Is it hot or cold? What does it smell like? Talk to your child about what you are doing during sensory play and keep language simple for example when playing with dried rice say ‘rice in’ when putting rice into a bowl, ‘round and round’ when stirring the rice, ‘all gone’ when the rice has been emptied out of the bowl.

Some children take a while to get used to different textures. Introduce new textures gradually and never force your child to explore them.

### Top Tips for sensory play at home

Keep it simple! You don’t have to go out and buy expensive items for sensory play. Look in your kitchen cupboards – rice, pasta, cereals, washing up liquid in water and baked beans are great items to use!

Why not try incorporating this into your child’s bathtime with plastic cups and bowls for pouring and emptying.

Use items in your kitchen e.g. spoons and bowls to fill, scoop, empty and stir.

Manage the mess by using an old shower curtain, plastic table cloth or even a small paddling pool.

Allow your child to freely explore the items you have put out using their senses; touch, smell, taste etc, but don’t pressure them if they aren’t ready to do this yet.

Smile and enjoy the experience with your child; if your child sees you are relaxed and enjoying it, they will want to join in the fun too.

Talk to your child about what you are doing, and what they are doing too – most of all enjoy!