

# A Tinker Tray Play Guide to Sensory Play

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## What is Sensory Play?

Sensory play is any type of play that enables babies and young children to explore and investigate using one or more of their five senses: touch, smell, sight, taste and hearing. Babies and children make sense of the world and their environment using their senses. Giving babies the chance to investigate objects through sensory play allows them to understand the world around them which causes the brain to form new connections and supports their growth and development.

As adults, we often associate things that we have learned or experienced with a particular sense. For example, the smell of a fire burning might make you think of crisp, cold bonfire nights, the sound of popcorn popping might make you think of a cinema experience. We attach memories to senses and they become a part of our sense of self. Sensory play is the beginning of this lifelong process.



## What will my child learn from sensory play?

- How to regulate emotions through the calming properties of sensory play
- Understanding of the world around them
- Sensory experiences and development
- Fine and gross motor skills
- Literacy and use of language, talking about the play and describing its different sensory attributes. I.e. wet, smooth, sticky.
- Scientific thinking and problem solving, investigating materials

## How can I support sensory play?

There are lots of very simple ways to introduce sensory play. Add some bright and colourful scarves to a baby gym, blow on them and make them move, run them over baby. Add different materials and textures to play, things like playdough, sand, foam soap, paint, ice, water. Allow children to explore paint with more than a brush, use hands and feet. Make a walkway of different textures for children to walk on with bare feet.



## What age should sensory play start?

Sensory play can start at any age but is probably most beneficial from around 3-4 months when babies begin to become more aware of their surroundings and able to grasp with their hands and track movements with their eyes.

Perhaps most important is to remember that almost any play experience can have a sensory aspect and it doesn't need to be complicated. Add music and sound wherever possible, introduce scents and smells and have fun!