



# That's Using Your Senses!

*Your child's amazing curiosity is fueled by experiences that cause him to use his senses. You can help by letting him explore materials that are lumpy, sticky, gooey, grainy or bumpy.*

Things with an unusual texture, smell or look are called sensory materials. Playing with them encourages your child to use his senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell or taste.

Many **sensory materials** have other everyday uses – and that makes playing with them all the more fun for your child!

Sensory play can also boost your child's:

- > Fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination
- > Curiosity
- > Creativity
- > Social skills like sharing and cooperation
- > Self-control
- > Confidence

Some children need time to get used to the feel of unusual materials. If your child holds back from touching new

materials at first, let him explore them using his other senses.

Sensory play is:

1. Best when it's unstructured. This lets your child solve problems, experiment and use his imagination.
2. Soothing. It can help your child release tension and calm down.
3. Distracting. It's perfect for those times of the day when your child needs to be occupied.

## Suggestions for sensory play

To make cleanup easier, put the materials in a large, shallow container on the floor or a low table. An old sheet underneath can help contain the mess too.

- > **Potting or garden soil** – Add small garden tools, plastic flowerpots or a farm play set.

- > **Sand (wet or dry)** – Pretend to be at the beach with seashells, sand molds or toy construction vehicles.
- > **Snow** – Too cold to go out? Put on mittens and bring some of the white stuff inside.
- > **Fall leaves** – These are great because of the rustling sounds they make. Bring several varieties inside and match colors and shapes.
- > **Shaving cream** – Put an unbreakable mirror or shiny cookie sheet in the bottom of a container and let your child “decorate” his face.
- > **Ivory Snow and water** – A foamy and sudsy activity that's a great way for your child to wash a doll's clothes or give his stuffed animals a bath.
- > **Water** – Offer plastic pitchers and cups for pouring. Or explore how objects float and sink.
- > **Dried beans, rice or oatmeal** – Provide scooping and pouring toys. Bury small toys for your child to find.



*Remember to supervise your child when he plays with small objects or things that can sting his eyes, like soap. He should not put any sensory materials in his mouth, nose, ears or eyes.*



- > **Cotton balls** – Soft and snuggly items are great to use as pretend snow without the cold. Have a “snowball” fight!
- > **Easter basket grass or shredded paper** – Put that paper shredder to use! Bury plastic eggs and have an egg hunt.
- > **Play dough, clay and play putty** – Modeling materials are another type of sensory material.