

EARLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES



The Senses form the base for understanding, interacting and becoming aware of the environment.

Children learn through their senses.

They experience what the environment smells, looks, sounds and feels like.

They also become aware of how they move and relate to objects, people, plants and animals around them.

The senses give valuable input and information to the brain. This information is then analyzed and used for an adequate response in the form of a motor action, thought, emotion or speech. Essentially, we can say that sensory integration forms a very important base for all perception and is therefore a crucial part in the development of the young child. If a child's sensory systems are working well and efficiently together, then adequate development of speech, motor function, perception, emotional growth and balance can take place.

This development does not happen on its own. The child needs a stimulating environment and multiple sensory experiences, and adventures with his/her body in the environment to establish good sensory systems.

The following activities are designed for young children from 3 to 6 years old and can be easily implemented in a home or a classroom setting, in addition to the existing routine or curriculum.

The sense of touch

TACTILE BAG

Fill a bag with everyday items such as a washing peg, spoon, sponge, piece of soft cloth, a stone, shell or a leaf.

Show the items in the bag to the children and discuss them. Talk about their colour, shape and what they can be used for.

Then cover the items with a cloth or put them in a bag but make sure the children cannot see them.

Now let the children use their hands only (no eyesight) to identify the items by **touch**.

You can also ask the children how many items they can remember after discussing the items, OR - cover the items and make up a story that involves the items, *for example*, “once upon a time on a big beach there was a little shell. The shell had a friend which was a stone and together they wanted to explore the world and then on their journey they meet ... (the other items)”, and every time an item comes up, they have to remember it, raise their hands and tell you what they can remember.

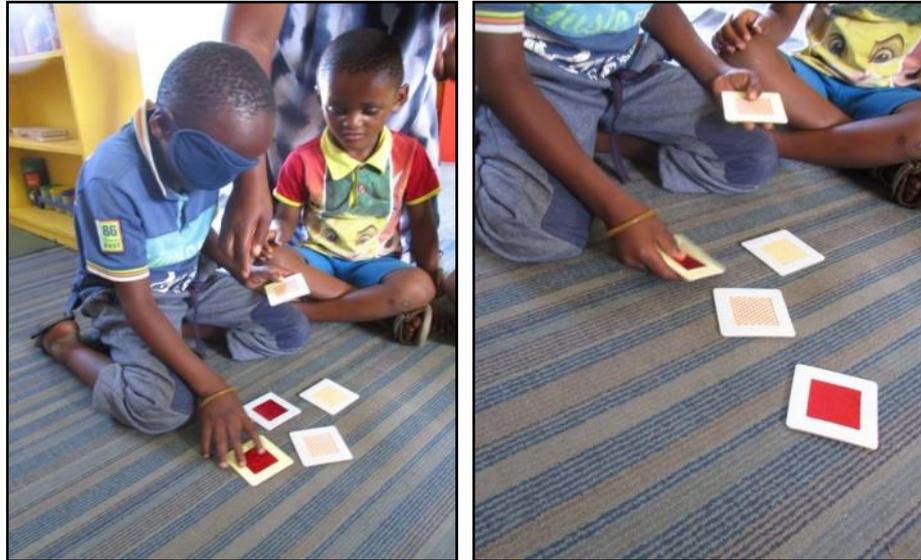
Then they have to find the item in the bag.

The activity can be extended by drawing some of the items (children from 5 years old) or by tracing the items shapes on a piece of paper and the colouring the shapes in different colours.



TACTILE MEMORY

Make your own tactile memory game by cutting cardboard squares and gluing different items onto them. You can use cotton wool, pieces of cloth, shells, sand, milk bottle tops or other items that have an interesting feel to them. Make a pair of each and glue the items onto the cards. Let it dry and then blind fold the children and let them identify the pairs simply by touch.



TACTILE MAZE

Making a Maze or Obstacle course with your children enhances many skills such as the sense of touch, gross /fine motor as well as perceptual skills and body awareness. You can use boxes and fill them with sand, leaves, foil, dried peas, beans or grass. Your possibilities are endless and you can change the items every time you do the activity. You can also use cardboard sheets and glue items such as lolly pop sticks, buttons or felt onto them.

Create a sensory obstacle course with the items. Let the children take their shoes off and walk through the boxes and over the cardboard.

Talk about the different textures. Ask questions. What do the items feel like?

Discuss words such as soft, hard, cold, itchy, rough and compare the textures.



PLAY DOUGH

Play Dough Recipe

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| 😊 1 to 2 tablespoons of cooking oil | 😊 1 tablespoon cream of tartar |
| 😊 1 cup flour | 😊 1 cup of water |
| 😊 ½ cup salt | 😊 Food colouring (optional) |

Mix all the ingredients together using your hands. Let your children get messy and squeeze and mix the dough. Knead the mixture into a ball and wrap it up in plastic - wrap it up immediately. Let it sit for 30 minutes. You can then use the play dough or you can store it in a plastic container and reuse it again at another time.



Always let your child warm up the dough before you start. Give the child a piece of dough that can fit into one hand (child size) and encourage your child to use both hands to warm up the dough and knead the dough. Using both hands gives tactile input and enhances bilateral integration.

- 😊 Let your child make a ball with both hands. Make a face with the ball. Encourage the child to form eyes, nose, mouth and hair. This is good for development of dexterity and encourages body awareness.
- 😊 Make a human figure with all the body parts.
- 😊 Let your child roll the play dough into a sausage keeping his/her fingers straight. Try turning the sausage into a snake, mould it into letters or numbers, or twist two or three sausages together like a hair plait.
- 😊 Cut the sausage with your fingers or a scissors, pinch the sausage and make patterns or form little animals with it.
- 😊 Flatten a large piece of play dough and make a handprint on it or use a stick to make patterns, letters or shapes into the dough. Press different small items into the dough such as shells, peas or beans.
- 😊 Roll the play dough flat using a rolling pin and cut out shapes using a biscuit cutter or animal shape cutters. Make prints with leaves or other structured material.
- 😊 Squeeze the play dough through a garlic crusher to make 'worms' or 'noodles'. These can be used as decorations for as hair for a person or cheese for a pizza.
- 😊 Mould the play dough into animals, people, food, jewellery or volcanoes.
- 😊 Make pretend food such as a pizza, sausage or cake, then cut it up using a knife and fork or a scissors.
- 😊 Make a bird's nest filled with eggs. Rolling the eggs with both hands using the palm of the hand. Poke your thumb down into the centre of the ball and pinch all around to form the sides of the nest. After that make eggs by rolling the play dough into balls between your thumb and index finger.

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Take a white sheet of paper and draw a face, a sun, a house or any other picture using clear lines. Put the piece of paper with the drawing onto a plastic sheet and show your child how to use balls and long sausages to cover all the lines on the drawing. This activity helps the eyes and hands work well together.



The sense of smell



SPICY PAINT ~ PAINTING WITH ALL THE SENSES

Painting with spicy paint includes the sense of smell and sight, it enhances hand skills as the children need to handle different size brushes in the activity.

If the children are comfortable with it, you can let them use the paint with their fingers as this gives nice tactile input. Include the children in making the paint.

Let them mix flour and water, measure quantities and stir the paint together. Encourage them to use their sense of smell and identify the quality of the different olfactory sensations.

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Spicy Paint Recipe

- 😊 4 bowls
- 😊 4 spoons for mixing
- 😊 1 cup flour
- 😊 1¼ cups cold water
- 😊 1 tablespoons of cooking oil
- 😊 spices
- 😊 paint brushes
- 😊 paper

Mix the flour, water, and oil together in a bowl. The mixture should not be drippy, but not also not super thick either.

Split the mixture into four bowls.

Add 1 to 2 tablespoons of one spice into one of the bowls with mixture in it. Repeat with each spice into the other bowls of mixture.

Mix. Mix. Mix. Keep mixing until desired colour is reached.

Give the mixtures in the bowls to your child to paint with.

Ideas for Painting

- 😊 Give children a piece of paper and let them create freely to make a smelly picture.
- 😊 Give children a pen or pencil. Let them trace their hand on a piece of paper and then paint in between the lines with spicy paint. Children can work as a group on one big sheet.
- 😊 Make a spicy rainbow.
- 😊 Make different shapes and paint them in different smells, write names and letters, and paint lines in different directions.



SMELL MEMORY

Working with The Smelling Kit

- 😊 We need about 10 identical little bottles or cups.
- 😊 We fill them with smells ~ the same smell in 2 bottles (pairs of smells). Examples of smells you can use are vinegar, vanilla, herbs that you can find, lemon, or others you can think of ...
- 😊 The children have to smell each bottle and describe the smell. Maybe it evokes a memory. Ask questions such as what do you smell? Is it sweet, is it sour? Have you smelled it before? What does it remind you of?
- 😊 Then the kids have to match the smells. Find the pairs by smelling through all the bottles.



The sense of sound

Sound is all around us and also inside us.



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We can use our breathing, our body and our voice to make sound.

Use your voice to make sound. Encourage children to speak softly and loudly, sing, breathe and sound out letters, play with different ways to bring out sound through your mouth.

Experiment and find out how many different sounds you can make with your body:

you can clap

you can whistle

you can stomp

pop your cheeks

click your fingers

you can sing

you can breath...
and listen

You can make your own shakers from paper rolls.

First paint the paper rolls and when they are dry, fill them with rice, sand and/or stones and then close them up at each end.

- ☺ Create sound with the shaker and let the children copy the rhythm.
- ☺ Let the children move to the sound of the shaker.
- ☺ Let the children close their eyes and identify the direction of where the sound is coming from with their eyes closed.
- ☺ Let the children walk, run or hop in the room or garden and ask them to stop when the sound stops.



The sense of taste



Give the children different fruit and vegetables to taste.
Talk about the different tastes ~ sweet, salty, spicy, sour, bitter and dry:

- 😊 Sweet = honey, sweet fruit like grapes, bananas and litchis,
- 😊 Sour = vinegar, pickles, citrus such as lemons,
- 😊 Salty = salt, olives, meat, fish,
- 😊 Spicy = ginger, cinnamon, radishes, cinnamon, mustard, cloves,
- 😊 Bitter = celery, spekboom leaves.

Expose your child to different tastes and include different food into your child's diet.

Blindfold the children and let them taste different food or fruit. Ask them to name the food or fruit they have tasted. Ask them what it tastes like, is it sour, is it sweet, is it spicy?

Make a delicious fruit salad and enjoy.

Talk about the taste. What do you taste when you eat the fruit salad? And what is the texture?

... last but not least

Remember! Always be kind and gentle when you do activities with children.
It is supposed to be FUN, EXPLORATION and PLAY.



Be kind - Be gentle
Make it
FUN, EXPLORATION, PLAY