



Outdoor Sensory Activities

- * **Sensory play is an essential part of childhood development!** Our senses provide us with vital information thousands of times per day. Starting from birth children use their senses to explore and learn about the world around them. It is important to provide opportunities for sensory play for children every single day. There are so many benefits when children engage in regular sensory play – including cognitive development, increased brain function, improved emotional regulation, and heightened ability to process new information. Sensory play supports children’s growth and learning!
- * **There are also many benefits to playing outside! Outdoor play allows children to:** explore and learn about their environment, develop muscle strength and coordination, gain self-confidence, increase fine and gross motor skills, develop a wide variety of physical skills, and so much more!
- * There are many great tub/container options, scoops, and other items available at your local dollar store (please be aware of choking hazards when working with children under 30 months). For social distancing consider providing each child with their own individual materials for play.



Frozen Excavation

Materials Needed: Water, food coloring, toys or other safe random items to be frozen inside ice (be mindful of choking hazards for children under 30 months), pan, trays or other easy release vessels to hold water while being frozen

Directions: For social distancing consider having each child create their own, provide each child with materials for pouring water into containers, food coloring, toys to add, then freeze (label children’s work with masking tape, consider allowing each child to have their own bin for play, take it outside so that children have plenty of space to play 6 feet apart

More ways to use ice: <https://littlebinsforlittlehands.com/ice-play-simple-sensory-activities/>

Video ideas: <https://youtu.be/dRVxOJGC6g0>



Foam Soap

Materials Needed: Water, soap (choose a tear free option for younger children), hand mixer or whisk, large mixing bowl, or just make it directly in individual tubs for children

Directions: This part may be done by educator or older school age child-pour water into bin or large mixing bowl, add a fair amount of soap (more could always be added if not enough of a foam consistency is achieved), ideally use a hand mixer or whisk if that’s what you have available to whip the soap and water mixture until it is nice and foamy, color can be added now or by children.

Give foam in individual bins to children, allow them to add color, provide toy and items to scoop with such as cups, and spoons.

Article: <https://busytoddler.com/2015/11/bubble-foam/>

Video: <https://youtu.be/Bobuj5Mgd7A>



Texture Walk

Materials Needed: Buckets, Bags or something to collect items in, Outdoor Space

Directions: Take a nature walk around your outdoor space and encourage the children to find items of different textures. Examples: hard rocks, rough rocks, smooth rocks, soft leaves, smooth leaves, bumpy sticks, fluffy weeds, silky flower, bristly pinecone, etc...

Article: <https://www.lifewithmoorebabies.com/2012/08/texture-walk.html>

Video: <https://youtu.be/epc7FJ04Bsw>



Fill The Bucket

Materials Needed: Buckets/Containers/Large Bowls, Sponges, Water

Directions: Fill one container with water, leaving others empty. Place the sponge in the water and allow it to soak up the liquid. Then bring the sponge to an empty container and squeeze the water from the sponge. Encourage the children to continue until the container is full of water. Together the teacher and child can make predictions around how many times the child will have to soak the sponge to fill the container then count each trip the child makes to fill the container.

Article: <https://www.theresourcefulmama.com/fill-the-bucket-outdoor-water-game/>

- ♥ Consider how you could incorporate the activity areas outdoors with: art tools, dramatic play items, science exploration items, water & sand play. Your outdoor area can house many similar items to those used for play indoors!

Additional resources:

- ⇒ Book “Sand and Water Play” by Sherrie West and Amy Cox
- ⇒ Huge list of Outdoor Activities for sensory fun: <https://www.thechaosandtheclutter.com/archives/huge-list-outdoor-sensory-fun> (We do not recommend or condone the use of food for sensory play)

