The Child Unplugged

# 101 WAYS TO PLAY COLLECTION

Simple play ideas to connect.
Explore & Support yours babies developmenr

**103**
Simple Play Ideas




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# Introduction

The 101 Ways to Play Collection is filled with engaging, screen-free activities designed to inspire curiosity, creativity, and meaningful learning. Each activity encourages children to explore, discover, problem-solve, and develop important skills through hands-on play.



# Why these activities are So Valuable



- Encourages creativity, imagination, and open-ended play.
- Supports learning through hands-on exploration.
- Develops fine and gross motor skills.
- Builds problem-solving and critical thinking skills.
- Promotes sensory discovery and meaningful play experiences.
- Strengthens communication and language development.
- Encourages curiosity, exploration, and a love of learning.
- Fosters independence, confidence, and resilience.
- Supports social skills, cooperation, and turn-taking.



# How to Support Play at Home

Create a fun and inviting play space where children can explore activities at their own pace. Encourage creativity, celebrate their ideas, and support learning through hands-on play, exploration, and discovery.

**Basic setup:**

- Gather the materials needed for the chosen activity.
- Use trays, baskets, mats, or containers to organise the play space.

**Simple steps:**

- Introduce the activity and materials.
- Encourage children to explore, create, investigate, and experiment.
- Ask open-ended questions to extend learning and conversation.

**Helpful tips:**

- Focus on the process rather than the end result.
- Adapt activities to suit your child's age, interests, and abilities.







# Ideas

- Explore sensory and messy play experiences.
- Create art, crafts, and imaginative creations.
- Build, sort, stack, and investigate with loose parts.

# FLOUR DOUGH

## WHATS NEEDED:

- 1/4 cup flour
- 1 cup cold water
- Food coloring

## WHAT TO DO:

- Mix flour and water in a saucepan.
- Cook on medium heat until it thickens.
- Cool and divide into containers. Add food coloring.

## BENEFITS:

- **Sensory Exploration:** Engages sight, touch, and sometimes taste—boosts sensory development.
- **Creative Expression:** Encourages color mixing, painting, and open-ended art.
- **Motor Skills:** Finger painting improves hand-eye coordination and fine motor control.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Color Variety:** Use food coloring or natural dyes (like beet juice, turmeric, or spinach water).
- **Texture Play:** Add oats, rice cereal, or sprinkles for a multi-textured experience.
- **Temperature Play:** Use warm or cool paint to explore temperature differences.
- **Squeeze Bottles:** Thicken slightly and let kids squeeze it out for pre-writing practice.

# COLOUR POSTING ACTIVITY

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Coloured tubes, containers, or boxes
- Coloured craft sticks, cards, counters, or pom poms
- Tray or basket for setup
- Colour labels (optional)

## WHAT TO DO:

- Set up the coloured containers and matching items.
- Invite children to choose an item.
- Identify the colour together.
- Post the item into the matching coloured container.
- Continue until all items have been sorted.

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages colour recognition
- Develops sorting and matching skills
- Strengthens fine motor skills
- Improves hand-eye coordination
- Builds concentration and focus
- Supports problem-solving skills
- Encourages independent learning



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with two or three colours for younger learners.
- Add more colours as confidence grows.
- Use larger items for easier posting.
- Introduce tongs for an extra fine motor challenge.
- Sort objects by both colour and size.
- Encourage children to name colours as they post each item.

# NATURE COLOUR MATCH

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Colour cards or coloured paper
- Basket, tray, or collection container
- Natural materials (leaves, flowers, petals, stones, sticks, etc.)
- Outdoor space or nature area

## WHAT TO DO:

- Place colour cards on a tray or table.
- Collect natural items from the environment.
- Match each item to the closest colour card.
- Talk about the colours and textures of the items.
- Continue until all colours have been explored.

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages colour recognition
- Develops observation skills
- Promotes sensory exploration
- Supports language and vocabulary development
- Encourages connection with nature
- Builds concentration and focus
- Strengthens sorting and matching skills



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with two or three colours for younger learners.
- Use larger, brightly coloured natural items.
- Add more colour cards for a challenge.
- Sort items by colour before matching.
- Explore seasonal colours in nature.
- Encourage children to describe the items they find and match.

# COLOUR PLAYDOUGH INVITATION

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Different coloured playdough
- Matching loose parts (buttons, pom poms, beads, gems, craft sticks, etc.)
- Tray or play surface
- Playdough tools (optional)

## WHAT TO DO:

- Set out coloured playdough and matching loose parts.
- Encourage children to explore, create, and decorate the playdough.
- Match loose parts to the corresponding colours.
- Talk about the colours and creations as they play.

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages colour recognition
- Develops fine motor skills and hand strength
- Promotes creativity and imagination
- Supports sensory exploration
- Builds concentration and focus
- Encourages language development
- Strengthens hand-eye coordination



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with two or three colours for younger learners.
- Add more colours as confidence grows.
- Use themed loose parts (nature, animals, transport, etc.).
- Encourage colour sorting before decorating.
- Mix colours together to explore colour changes.
- Use playdough tools for additional fine motor challenges

# COLOUR TREASURE HUNT

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Colour cards or coloured paper
- Basket, bucket, or collection tray
- Indoor or outdoor play space
- Everyday objects or natural materials

## WHAT TO DO:

- Choose a colour to hunt for.
- Invite children to search for objects that match the colour.
- Collect the items in a basket or tray.
- Name the colours and compare the objects found.
- Repeat with different colours.

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages colour recognition
- Develops observation skills
- Supports language and vocabulary development
- Promotes problem-solving and critical thinking
- Encourages movement and active learning
- Builds concentration and focus
- Strengthens sorting and matching skills
- Fosters curiosity about the environment




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with one colour for younger learners.
- Use colour cards as visual prompts.
- Hunt for multiple colours at once for a challenge.
- Sort the collected items by colour afterwards.
- Explore indoors, outdoors, or in nature.
- Encourage children to describe the objects they find.

# RAINBOW COLLAGE CRAFT

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Rainbow outline template or plain paper
- Coloured paper or tissue paper
- Pom-poms, buttons, coloured pasta, or loose craft materials(optional)
- Glue or glue sticks
- Child-safe scissors (optional)
- Cotton wool for clouds (optional)

## WHAT TO DO:

- Get a ready rainbow outline.
- Invite children to choose colourful materials for each rainbow stripe.
- Tear, stick, arrange, and decorate the rainbow using different textures and colours.
- Add cotton wool clouds or extra decorations if desired.
- Allow children to explore freely and create their own rainbow in their own unique way.

## BENEFITS:

- Strengthens fine motor skills through tearing and sticking
- Encourages colour recognition and sorting
- Develops hand-eye coordination
- Supports creativity and independent decision-making
- Introduces texture and sensory exploration
- Promotes focus and concentration through hands-on play



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For toddlers:** Use larger materials and pre-cut pieces for easier handling.
- **For older children:** Encourage pattern-making or rainbow sequencing challenges.
- **For sensory play:** Add textured materials like felt, foil, or fabric scraps.
- **For nature-based play:** Use flower petals, leaves, or natural loose parts.
- **For group activities:** Create one large collaborative classroom rainbow.

# NUMBER FORMATION - DRIED FLOWERS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Number formation cards
- Dried flowers and petals
- Tweezers
- Workspace

**Sensory Play Ideas:**

- Pair with sensory trays filled with petals, leaves, or dried herbs
- Explore different flower textures, colors, and scents

## WHAT TO DO:

- Choose a number card
- Observe the number shape together
- Select dried flowers or petals
- Arrange the flowers along the number outline
- Count pieces aloud while building
- Name and trace the completed number

**Extend the learning:**

- Create number patterns
- Build numbers independently using loose parts

## BENEFITS:

- Strengthens number recognition and formation
- Builds counting and one-to-one correspondence
- Develops fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination
- Encourages sensory and tactile exploration
- Supports concentration and visual perception
- Promotes creativity and nature-based learning
- Encourages calm, focused play
- Builds confidence in early math skills



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Toddlers:** Focus on numbers 1–3 using large flower pieces
- **Preschoolers:** Practice numbers 1–10 with counting and tracing
- **Older children:** Create number sequences, simple equations, or patterns using flowers

# FEED THE NUMBER MONSTER

## WHATS NEEDED:

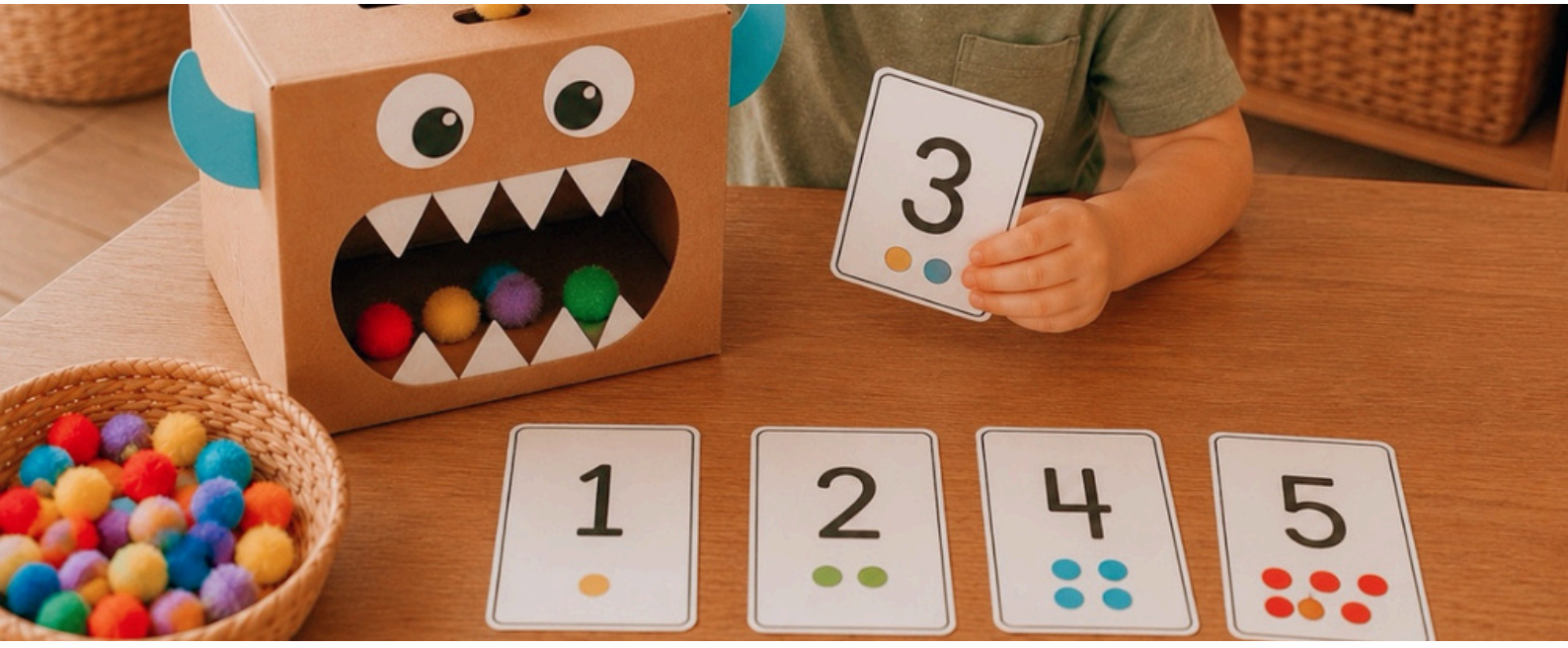
- Monster box, container, or printable monster
- Number cards or numbered monster mouths
- Counters, pom poms, loose parts, or craft items
- Tray or basket for setup
- Tongs (optional)

## WHAT TO DO:

- Choose a number on the monster.
- Count the matching number of items.
- Feed the items into the monster's mouth.
- Count aloud as each item is added.
- Repeat with different numbers.

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages early counting skills
- Develops one-to-one correspondence
- Supports number recognition
- Strengthens fine motor skills
- Improves hand-eye coordination
- Builds concentration and focus
- Encourages problem-solving and independent learning




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use numbers 1–5 for younger learners.
- Increase to larger numbers for older children.
- Use tongs to develop fine motor skills.
- Sort items by colour before feeding the monster.
- Add simple addition challenges for older children.
- Encourage children to identify and say the number before counting.

# ALPHABET WATER PLAY

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Floating foam or plastic letters
- Water tray, tub, or sensory bin
- Scoops, cups, or nets
- Towel for spills
- Letter cards (optional)

## WHAT TO DO:

- Fill a tray or tub with water.
- Add floating letters.
- Encourage children to scoop out letters and name them.
- Match letters to letter cards or sort them into groups.
- Continue exploring and identifying different letters.

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages letter recognition
- Supports early literacy skills
- Promotes sensory exploration
- Develops fine motor skills
- Strengthens hand-eye coordination
- Encourages language development
- Builds concentration and focus
- Makes learning fun and engaging




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use only a few letters for younger learners.
- Focus on the letters in the child's name.
- Match uppercase and lowercase letters.
- Sort letters by colour.
- Introduce letter sounds for older children.
- Use tongs or nets to add a fine motor challenge.

# NUMBER PLAYDOUGH MATS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Number playdough mats
- Playdough
- Tray or table space
- Number cards (optional)

## WHAT TO DO:

- Choose a number mat.
- Identify the number shown.
- Roll playdough into small balls.
- Count and place the correct number of balls onto the mat.
- Repeat with different numbers.

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages early counting skills
- Develops one-to-one correspondence
- Supports number recognition
- Strengthens fine motor skills and finger muscles
- Improves hand-eye coordination
- Builds concentration and focus
- Encourages independent learning through play.




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with numbers 1–5 for younger learners.
- Increase to larger numbers for older children.
- Use different colours of playdough for added engagement.
- Encourage children to count aloud as they place each ball.
- Add number cards for matching practice.
- Use tweezers to place the playdough balls for an extra challenge.

# CATERPILLAR NUMBER PUZZLE

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Wooden number circle puzzle pieces
- Flat play surface or tray
- Optional: number cards, timer, or counting objects (pom-poms, beads, buttons)

## WHAT TO DO:

- Spread the puzzle pieces out on the table.
- Encourage the child to identify the numbers on each piece.
- Match and connect the pieces correctly to complete the circles.
- Practice placing numbers in order from smallest to largest.
- Count aloud together while touching each number.
- Challenge the child to find missing numbers or complete partial circles independently.

## BENEFITS:

- Builds number recognition
- Strengthens counting and sequencing skills
- Develops fine motor coordination and hand strength
- Encourages problem-solving and visual discrimination
- Supports independent learning and concentration
- Introduces early math concepts through tactile play




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Younger Children:** Focus on fewer numbers, colors, or shapes
- **Older Children:** Add simple math challenges like before/after numbers
- **Sensory Support:** Use textured mats and verbal prompts
- **Group Play:** Cooperative matching games or timed challenges
- **Advanced Learners:** Practice skip counting, odd/even numbers, and simple addition

# LITTLE LEARNER BLOCKS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Little Learner Blocks
- Play mat, tray, or open floor space

**Optional Extras**

- Flashcards
- Small baskets or containers for sorting
- Play dough
- Sensory trays (rice, sand, water beads, etc.)
- Chalkboards, whiteboards, or markers for extension activities

## WHAT TO DO:

- Identify letters, numbers, words, and pictures
- Stack, sort, and build with the blocks
- Match letters, colours, or numbers
- Practice counting and simple word building
- Use blocks during imaginative and storytelling play

## BENEFITS:

- Supports early literacy and language skills
- Develops counting and number recognition
- Strengthens fine motor skills and coordination
- Encourages problem-solving and critical thinking
- Builds creativity, confidence, and social interaction




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Younger toddlers:** Focus on stacking, colours, and simple naming activities
- **Preschoolers:** Practice counting, matching, and CVC word building
- **Advanced learners:** Create longer words, patterns, and maths challenges
- **Sensory play:** Add blocks to sand, rice, or play dough activities
- **Group play:** Use for team games, sorting stations, or collaborative building tasks

# ALPHABET RECOGNITION BOARD

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Wooden uppercase alphabet boards
- Loose uppercase wooden letter pieces
- Tweezers
- Tray, basket, or mesh storage bag

**Sensory Play Ideas:**

- Hide letters in sensory bins for discovery play
- Trace letters in sand, salt, or shaving foam
- Build letters using play dough or loose parts

## WHAT TO DO:

- Introduce a few letters at a time
- Identify and name each letter
- Match loose letters to the correct spaces on the board
- Say letter names and sounds aloud together
- Repeat through hands-on play and repetition

**Extend the learning:**

- Find matching letters around the room
- Match letters to objects with the same beginning sound
- Trace letters in sand or salt after matching

## BENEFITS:

- Builds uppercase letter recognition
- Strengthens early literacy and phonics awareness
- Develops fine motor control and hand-eye coordination
- Encourages concentration and problem-solving
- Supports tactile, visual, and sensory learning
- Builds confidence in reading readiness
- Encourages independent exploration and learning




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Toddlers:** Focus on a few familiar letters and simple matching
- **Preschoolers:** Explore the full alphabet and practice letter sounds
- **Older children:** Build simple words and practice beginning sounds and spelling

# ALPHABET FORMATION - NATURE

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Alphabet formation cards
- Natural materials such as:(Stones,Twigs or sticks,Leaves,Shells,Pebbles or seeds)
- Workspace

**Sensory Play Ideas:**

- Build letters in sand, soil, or grass
- Collect materials during a nature walk for added engagement
- Combine with sensory trays using natural elements

## WHAT TO DO:

- Choose a letter card
- Observe the letter shape together
- Collect natural materials
- Arrange items to form the letter
- Trace the letter shape with a finger before building
- Say the letter name and sound aloud
- Repeat with different letters

**Extend the learning:**

- Build the child's name letters
- Match letters to objects in nature

## BENEFITS:

- Builds letter recognition and formation skills
- Strengthens early phonics awareness
- Develops fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination
- Encourages sensory and tactile learning
- Supports visual discrimination and spatial awareness
- Promotes concentration and problem-solving
- Encourages creativity and nature connection
- Builds early literacy confidence



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Toddlers:** Focus on a few familiar letters and simple tracing or matching
- **Preschoolers:** Build full alphabet letters and practice letter sounds
- **Older children:** Form names, simple words, and explore uppercase vs lowercase differences

# WHAT'S YOUR NAME

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Letters to copy (depending on age)
- Nature, loose parts

## WHAT TO DO:

- Look at each letter of your name.
- Collect natural materials like leaves, twigs, petals, or small stones.
- Use the materials to recreate each letter on a piece of paper.
- Optionally, use playdough to shape the letters and decorate with nature items.

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages creativity and self-expression.
- Builds letter recognition and early literacy skills.
- Develops fine motor skills through handling small natural materials or playdough.
- Connects children to nature and sensory exploration.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Age:** Toddlers – focus on first letter; Older kids – spell full names or decorate letters with patterns.
- **Abilities:** Use larger or easier-to-handle materials, provide templates, or guide hand placement.
- **Materials:** Natural items, playdough, or cardboard letters for tracing.
- **Setting:** Indoors – on paper or trays; Outdoors – use sticks, leaves, or stones on the ground.

# LADYBUG BEGINNING SOUNDS SPINNER

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Ladybug beginning sounds spinner board with attached rotating picture sections

**Sensory Play Ideas:**

- Pair with sensory bins using objects that match the sounds
- Use tactile alphabet letters alongside the spinner

## WHAT TO DO:

- Choose a ladybug spinner
- Rotate the spinner to reveal a picture
- Name the picture together
- Identify the beginning sound
- Say the matching letter aloud
- Match the sound to other objects or words with the same beginning letter

**Extend the learning:**

- Sort pictures by beginning sounds
- Find objects around the room with matching sounds

## BENEFITS:

- Builds beginning sound and phonics awareness
- Strengthens letter recognition and sound association
- Expands vocabulary and language skills
- Develops listening and sound discrimination
- Encourages problem-solving and critical thinking
- Supports fine motor development through spinning and pointing
- Promotes independent, hands-on learning




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Toddlers:** Focus on naming pictures and hearing simple sounds
- **Preschoolers:** Match beginning sounds to letters and words
- **Older children:** Explore rhyming, ending sounds, and simple spelling activities

# FRUIT PAINT

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Fresh fruits (strawberries, blueberries, kiwi, oranges, bananas, etc.)
- Knife for adult use (to chop fruits)
- Bowls
- Tuff tray for messy play
- Paper, cardstock for painting
- Optional: brushes, stamps & cookie cutters,

## WHAT TO DO:

- Chop fruit
- Mash fruit with a fork or spoon, or blend to make a smoother paint.
- Pour into small bowls
- Provide paper, brushes, or stamps for painting.
- Encourage kids to explore colors, mix fruits, and create designs.
- Discuss colors, textures, and smells as they play.

## BENEFITS:

- Kids experience textures, colors, and smells of different fruits.
- Squishing, brushing, stamping, & spreading paint strengthens hand muscles.
- Kids can paint freely or make fruit-themed art.
- Introduces fruits, colors, and shapes in a playful way.
- Edible & Safe




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Stamping Fun – Use halves of apples, oranges, or lemons as stamps.
- Rainbow Paints – Assign different fruits to make a ~rainbow artwork.
- Scented Play – Let kids smell each fruit before painting to engage multiple senses.
- Mix with Other Materials – Add oats, rice, or edible glitter for texture.

# CHICKPEA FOAM

## WHATS NEEDED:

- 1 can chickpeas (drained, liquid reserved)
- Hand blender or whisk
- Large tray or shallow container
- Optional: small cups, spoons, scoops, and safe toys for play
- Optional: food coloring for extra fun

## WHAT TO DO:

- Drain chickpeas, reserving the liquid (aquafaba).
- Whip the aquafaba with a hand blender or whisk until it forms stiff peaks (like meringue).
- Spoon the fluffy foam onto a tray or shallow container.
- Add optional food coloring or small toys for sensory exploration.

## BENEFITS:

- Light, fluffy, and soft to touch.
- Scooping, patting, and squeezing builds hand strength.
- Make shapes, patterns, or “clouds.”
- Explore texture, volume, and trapped air.
- Soft, soothing airy texture
- Made from simple kitchen ingredients.




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Colorful Foam** – Add a few drops of food coloring to make rainbow clouds.
- **Hidden Objects** – Bury small toys for a sensory “treasure hunt.”
- **Themed Play** – Snow scenes, clouds, or pretend baking.
- **Add Scent** – Safe extracts like vanilla or lemon can add a sensory twist.
- **Tools & Utensils** – Spoons, scoops, or cookie cutters for shaping and fine motor practice.
- Encourage kids to squish, pat, and mold the foam with their hands or tools.

# OOBLECK

## WHATS NEEDED:

- 1 cup cornstarch (cornflour)
- About ½ cup water (adjust for consistency)
- Food coloring (optional, a few drops)
- Mixing bowl
- Spoon or hands for mixing
- Airtight storage bin or container

## WHAT TO DO:

- Add cornstarch to the mixing bowl.
- Add water while stirring. Start with half a cup and adjust as needed.
- Mix in food coloring
- Check the texture: Press quickly → should feel solid
- Let it rest → should flow like a liquid

## BENEFITS:

- Engages touch, pressure, and movement awareness.
- Squeezing, pressing, rolling, and pinching strengthen hands and fingers.
- Kids learn about solids vs. liquids and cause/effect.
- Color mixing, patterns, and playful shapes.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Colors & Swirls:** Mix two colors in one batch for rainbow effects.
- **Flavors:** Add a few drops of vanilla, cocoa, or fruit essence (optional, edible).
- **Texture:** Mix in a teaspoon of sugar or powdered milk for a slightly gritty but edible twist.
- **Mini molds:** Shape into letters, animals, or holiday shapes using silicone molds.
- **Double batch:** Make in small portions for different colors to swirl together.

# RAINBOW SPAGHETTI

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Cooked spaghetti
- Food coloring
- Oil (optional, prevents sticking)
- Ziploc bags
- Plastic container for storage
- Optional: tongs, spoons, sprinkle-safe glitter, small toys for play

## WHAT TO DO:

- Divide cooked spaghetti into separate Ziploc bags.
- Add a few drops of food coloring to each bag.
- Add a tiny splash of oil (optional) and shake the bag until the color spreads.
- Leave for 5–10 minutes, then rinse lightly if needed.
- Place into a container and let the sensory fun begin!

## BENEFITS:

- Builds fine motor skills (pulling, squishing, scooping)
- Supports color recognition and sorting
- Encourages sensory exploration in a safe, edible way
- Helps with focus and calming through tactile play
- Boosts creativity and imaginative play



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Babies/Toddlers: Keep longer noodles for easy gripping; skip the oil.
- Older Kids: Add scissors for snipping practice or create “spaghetti art.”
- Themed Play: Add toy insects, kitchen tools, or color-matching cups.
- Learning Focus: Use it for counting, patterning, or sorting by color.

# PUDDING PAINTING

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Pudding Mix (Any)
- Colouring

## TIPS:

Use clear cups or trays to layer colourful pudding—great for sensory fun, colour recognition, and pretend cooking play.

## WHAT TO DO:

- Make the pudding following the box instructions and let it set
- Divide into small bowls and add food coloring
- Let children mix and explore the colors
- Encourage squishing, painting, and sensory play
- Enjoy tasting as part of the activity

## BENEFITS:

- **Sensory Exploration:** Feel textures, colors, and consistency
- **Creativity:** Experiment with mixing and painting
- **Fine Motor Skills:** Smooshing and spreading improves hand control
- **Taste-Safe Fun:** Safe to explore with mouth as well
- **Engagement:** Keeps children interested and curious



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Cake Icing Spatula** – Have the kids smooth the pudding.
- **Pizza Cutter** – Have the kids cut the Pudding
- **Whisk** – To make fun designs
- **Turner** – Move the Pudding to one side of the paper. See how many times it takes to move the Pudding from one side of the paper to the other.
- **Tongs** – Have them try to pick up the pudding with the tongs.
- **Potato Masher** – Use it to make designs, and you can also use it as a pudding stamp!

# YOGURT PAINTING

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Yogurt
- Food colouring
- Pots
- Paint brushes
- Paper

## NOTES:

- Paint is for single use only
- Do not store or reuse after play

## WHAT TO DO:

- Add a few drops of food coloring to the yogurt
- Stir continuously until the yogurt is evenly colored
- Adjust the number of drops for lighter or brighter shades
- Encourage children to watch the color change as they mix

## BENEFITS:

- Fine motor skills
- Stimulates nervous system
- Hand-to-eye coordination
- Helps creative development
- Boosts Confidence & Self-Esteem
- Helps young children to understand/express themselves.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Develop gross motor skills by getting the whole body involved and use hands and feet to paint.
- Add additional tools such as stamps and rollers
- Add other ingredients to enhance the sensory experience ie rice or cereal
- Paint other objects ie decorating cookies etc
- Another one that is great for fussy eaters.

# CEREAL SAND

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Cheerios (or other round cereal)
- Sensory tray
- Scoops, spoons, or small cups
- Small toys or objects for burying (optional: animals, cars, gems)

## WHAT TO DO:

- **Prepare cereal “sand”:** Crush the cereal in a blender until it reaches a sand-like texture.
- **Fill the tray:** Pour the crushed cereal into the sensory tray to create a “sand” base.
- **Add toys:** Bury small objects in the cereal for digging and discovery.
- **Play:** Encourage children to scoop, pour, dig, sort, or create shapes with the cereal.

## BENEFITS:

- **Sensory exploration:** Kids explore the texture, sound, and movement of dry cereal.
- **Fine motor skills:** Scooping, pouring, and picking up pieces strengthen fingers and hands.
- **Hand-eye coordination:** Digging, sorting, and transferring improve precision.
- **Creativity & imagination:** Children can build shapes, patterns, or small landscapes.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Mix cereals:** Combine different shapes or colors for visual and tactile variety.
- **Themed play:** Add dinosaurs, farm animals, or small vehicles for imaginative scenarios.
- **Tools challenge:** Introduce tweezers, spoons, or funnels to boost fine motor skills.
- **Color and pattern:** Use food coloring on cereal (optional) for colorful sand play.
- **Texture mix:** Add dry rice, pasta, or beads for additional sensory contrast.

# CHIA SLIME

## WHATS NEEDED:

- 1/4 cup chia seeds
- 1 3/4 cups water
- Food coloring (optional)
- 1/2–1 cup cornstarch

## WHAT TO DO:

- Mix chia seeds, water, and food coloring. Soak overnight in fridge.
- Mix in cornstarch until it's a gooey, slime-like texture.

## BENEFITS:

- Sensory-Rich: Gooey, squishy texture stimulates touch and exploration.
- Squeezing, stretching, and scooping builds hand strength.
- Calming Play: The soft texture and slow movement can be soothing and regulate emotions.

## NOTES:

Soak Overnight: Let chia seeds fully absorb water (6–8 hours) to avoid grainy texture.




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Color Fun:** Add food coloring to the water before soaking chia seeds for bright, kid-friendly slime.
- **Texture Twist:** Mix in edible glitter or a bit of cornstarch for a thicker, stretchier feel.
- **Cool Sensory Play:** Chill the slime before play for a new sensory temperature experience.
- **Themed Play:** Match colors to themes (e.g., red for lava, blue for ocean slime, green for monster goo).

# MOON SAND/CLOUD DOUGH

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Flour
- Cooking oil
- Tray or sensory bin
- Scoops, cups, spoons, molds, or toy vehicles (optional)
- Food coloring, small toys, scoops, molds, or containers (optional)
- Large mixing bow

## WHAT TO DO:

- Add 8 cups flour to a tray or bowl.
- Slowly mix in 1 cup cooking oil.
- Rub together with hands until it feels soft, crumbly, and moldable.
- Pour into a tray, add tools, and play!

## BENEFITS:

- Soft, crumbly texture engages touch and supports calming play.
- cooping, squeezing, and molding strengthen little hands.
- Open-ended play encourages imagination and pretend scenes.
- Builds early math concepts like volume, cause-and-effect, and comparing sizes.




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Add Colors:** Use food coloring or natural dyes for rainbow cloud dough.
- **Hidden Objects:** Bury small toys for a “treasure hunt.”
- **Themed Play:** Castles, dinosaurs, or snow-themed setups.
- **Scented Dough:** Add vanilla, peppermint, or essential oils (kid-safe) for extra sensory fun.
- **Combine Textures:** Sprinkle in rice, beads, or sand for mixed sensory exploration.

# COLORED CORN

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Dried corn kernels
- Food coloring or liquid watercolors
- Small containers or zip-lock bags for coloring
- Sensory trays, bowls, or muffin trays for play
- Spoons, scoops, or small cups for handling

## WHAT TO DO:

- Place dried corn in a container or zip-lock bag
- Add a few drops of food coloring and stir or shake until evenly coated
- Let the corn dry completely before playing
- Transfer to sensory trays or containers for children to explore

## BENEFITS:

- Supports sensory exploration through touch and sight
- Develops fine motor skills (scooping, pouring, sorting)
- Encourages creativity and imaginative play
- Introduces early math skills like counting, sorting, and pattern-making
- Provides a safe tactile experience without ingestion



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children (2+ years):** Use small amounts and larger scoops or cups; supervise closely
- **For older children:** Introduce sorting by color, counting, or creating patterns
- **For sensory-sensitive children:** Start with tools like spoons or scoops instead of hands
- **For group play:** Provide individual trays to avoid conflicts and encourage parallel or collaborative play

# COLORED CHIC PEAS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Dried chickpeas
- Food coloring or liquid watercolors
- Small containers or zip-lock bags for coloring
- Muffin trays, bowls, or sensory trays for play
- Spoons, scoops, or small cups for handling

## WHAT TO DO:

- Place dried chickpeas into a container or bag
- Add a few drops of food coloring or liquid watercolors
- Shake or stir until the chickpeas are evenly coated
- Let them dry completely before use
- Transfer to sensory trays or containers for play

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages sensory exploration (touch, sight, color)
- Supports fine motor skills through scooping, pouring, and sorting
- Promotes creativity and imaginative play
- Introduces early math concepts (counting, sorting, patterns)
- Safe tactile play without ingestion



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children (2+ years):** Use fewer chickpeas at a time and larger scoops or cups for handling; supervise closely
- **For older children:** Introduce sorting by color, counting, or pattern-making activities
- **For sensory-sensitive children:** Encourage use of tools (spoons, scoops) instead of hands initially
- **For group play:** Provide individual trays to avoid conflicts and encourage parallel or collaborative play

# SLIME

## WHATS NEEDED:

- White or clear PVA glue
- Borax solution or contact lens solution (as slime activator)
- Food coloring or glitter (optional for customization)
- Mixing bowl and spoon
- Tray

## WHAT TO DO:

- Pour glue into a mixing bowl
- Add a few drops of food coloring or glitter if desired
- Slowly add activator (borax solution or contact lens solution) while stirring
- Knead with hands until it reaches the desired stretchy, gooey consistency
- Adjust with a little water for stretchiness or extra activator for firmer slime

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages sensory exploration and tactile learning
- Develops fine motor skills through stretching, pinching, and kneading
- Promotes creativity and imaginative play
- Introduces basic science concepts (mixing, cause-and-effect)
- Supports focus, patience, and problem-solving



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children (3+ years):** Use smaller portions and supervise closely; focus on squishing rather than mixing activator themselves
- **For older children:** Introduce add-ins like beads, foam balls, or textures for sensory variation
- **For group play:** Provide individual portions to avoid sharing conflicts and encourage turn-taking
- **For sensory-sensitive children:** Use gloves or tools for manipulation, or provide a softer, less sticky slime recipe

# SOAP FOAM

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Mild, non-toxic liquid soap or body wash
- Water
- Large mixing bowl or container
- Whisk, hand mixer, or frother
- Optional: food coloring or essential oils for color and scent
- Small cups, spoons, or scoops for play
- Tray to contain spills

## WHAT TO DO:

- Pour liquid soap into a bowl
- Add a small amount of water and whisk or froth until bubbly foam forms
- Optional: mix in food coloring or a few drops of mild essential oil
- Transfer foam to trays or containers for play
- Let children explore with hands, scoops, or cups

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages sensory exploration and tactile learning
- Supports fine motor development (scooping, pouring, stirring)
- Promotes creativity and imaginative play
- Introduces simple science concepts (mixing, foaming, cause-and-effect)
- Safe, non-toxic, and easy to clean



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children:** Keep small amounts in shallow trays; focus on scooping and simple exploration
- **For older children:** Encourage creating patterns, layering colors, or using tools like droppers and brushes
- **For sensory-sensitive children:** Allow use of tools instead of hands initially
- **For group play:** Provide individual trays to avoid crowding and sharing conflicts, and encourage parallel or collaborative play

# STICKER LINE UP

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Paper
- Marker
- Stickers
- Painter's Tape (my favourite to use on walls)

## WHAT TO DO:

- Take a large piece of paper and draw a straight line across it.
- Give the child a set of stickers to use.
- Encourage the child to place the stickers along the line, following the path.
- Mount the paper on a wall or vertical surface—this adds a fun, interactive twist.
- Turn it into a game or story: for example, the line is a "road," and the stickers are "cars"traveling along it.

## BENEFITS:

- Helps develop fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and pinching techniques.
- Encourages creativity and problem-solving.
- Can be used for patterning activities, encouraging recognition of colors and shapes.
- Supports early literacy and numeracy—for example, creating letters or numbers for stickers to be placed on.




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use large, easy-to-grasp stickers (e.g., foam or large plastic ones) to reduce frustration caused by pinching small items.
- Draw thick, wide lines or shapes (circles, squares) instead of thin lines to give more space for placement.
- Let kids place stickers freely first, before introducing "on the line" guidance, to build confidence and familiarity.
- Use pre-cut tape strips on surfaces to make sticking easier for little hands.

# SORTING & TRANSFER

## WHAT YOU NEED

- 3–5 small bowls or containers
- A selection of dry materials (e.g. pasta shapes, lentils, chickpeas, rice)
- Spoons, scoops, or small cups
- Optional: child-safe tweezers or tongs
- Tray or mat to catch spills

## WHAT TO DO

- Place different dry materials into one large bowl or mix them together.
- Provide empty bowls for sorting.
- Encourage your child to sort the materials by type, size, or colour.
- Use spoons or tongs to transfer items from one bowl to another.
- Talk about what they notice — big/small, smooth/rough, more/less.
- Extension idea: Count how many of each item were sorted.

## BENEFITS:

- Strengthens fine motor skills
- Improves hand–eye coordination
- Develops concentration and focus
- Introduces early maths concepts (sorting, categorising, comparing)
- Encourages sensory exploration
- Builds independence and confidence



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children:** Use larger items (e.g. large pasta or dried beans). Focus on simple transferring rather than sorting. Limit the number of materials to avoid overwhelm.
- **For older children:** Add a timer challenge. Introduce counting and recording totals.
- **Sort by more specific categories:** (colour shades, size differences). Create simple patterns using sorted materials.
- **Make it themed:** Colour rice with food colouring. Add small toy animals or objects to “rescue” from the bowl.

# ANIMAL RESCUE

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Tray
- Animals (small figurines)
- Spoon
- Food colouring
- Any sensory base

## WHAT TO DO:

- Fill a tray with rice, pasta, or other safe sensory material
- Add a few drops of food coloring for fun visuals
- Mix in small animals or toy figurines
- Give your child a scoop, spoon, or cup to dig and explore
- Let them play freely—scooping, pouring, and discovering

## BENEFITS:

- Sparks imagination through mini worlds and rescue scenarios
- Strengthens fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination
- Encourages problem-solving and critical thinking
- Teaches empathy and care for animals
- Supports language development and vocabulary growth



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Freeze the water to make it harder to get the animals out and provide tools for extraction.
- Swap water for rice or sand and hide the figures.
- Hide items in play-dough for discovery.
- Use letters instead of animals; sound them out and say a word starting with each letter.
- Tape animals to a tray or table and let your child “set them free.”
- Wrap animals in elastic bands for your child to free.
- Tie a rope or fabric over a basket and have your child extract the objects.

# PICK UP STICKS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Coloured straws/pipe
- Cleaners
- Color Dice
- Number Dice
- Markers
- Bucket

## WHAT TO DO:

- Scatter coloured pipecleaners on a flat surface in a small pile.
- Take turns carefully picking up one stick at a time without moving the others.
- If another stick moves, your turn ends.
- Roll a dice before your turn to decide how many sticks to collect or which colour you must pick up.
- Count your sticks at the end.
- Continue until all sticks are collected, then compare totals to see who has the most.

## BENEFITS:

- This simple twist adds maths, colour recognition, concentration and turn-taking to a classic fine motor game.
- Boosts creativity and imaginative play
- Enhances fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination
- Encourages problem-solving through bending and shaping
- Supports threading and sensory exploration
- Fun, versatile, and easy to set up anywhere



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Provide pipe cleaners in different textures (fuzzy, smooth, glittery, or wrapped in fabric) and let kids choose what feels comfortable.
- Keep the play space calm and uncluttered to avoid overstimulation.
- Use muted colors if bright hues are overwhelming, or bold colors if more visual input is needed.
- Let kids explore pipe cleaners without pressure to "create"—focus on tactile play first.

# FABRIC PEEKABOO

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Lightweight fabric (e.g. scarves, muslin cloths)
- Soft toy (optional, for hiding)
- Baby-safe mirror (optional)
- Safe, soft play space
- Your playful interaction and supervision

## WHAT TO DO:

- Choose a soft, lightweight fabric – like a scarf or muslin cloth.
- Gently cover your face or a toy with the fabric.
- Say “Peekaboo!” as you reveal your face or the toy to the baby.
- Encourage the baby to pull off the fabric themselves to discover what’s underneath.
- Repeat with smiles, songs, or different textures to keep it fun and engaging.

## BENEFITS:

- Boosts Visual Tracking – Helps babies follow movement and focus.
- Encourages Social Interaction – Promotes bonding through smiles and giggles.
- Supports Cognitive Skills – Teaches object permanence (understanding things still exist when hidden).
- Enhances Motor Development – Reaching and grabbing build hand-eye coordination.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Try varied fabrics for texture fun.
- Hide toys under fabric for baby to find.
- Use a mirror for added surprise.
- Sing peekaboo songs to engage.
- Let baby pull the fabric off themselves.

# WATER SOUND

## SETUP:

- Fill a large bowl or tray with shallow water
- Add cups, spoons, small containers
- Add a sponge and other play tools

## PLAY IDEAS:

- Fill a bowl with water and tap for a different sound
- Add water and notice together how the pitch changes.
- Tap different bowls to hear tone changes
- Show the child how each bowl makes a different sound when tapped.
- Drum along to a simple song or beat
- Play a rhythm and invite the child to drum with it.
- Encourage the child to make a simple 1–2–3 rhythm
- Help them repeat an easy pattern to build rhythm skills



## DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS:

- **Supports sensory regulation** - Gentle splashing and pouring can calm or engage a child, helping them manage sensory input.
- **Introduces rhythm through water movement** - Repeating actions like splashing, dripping, or pouring helps children feel simple rhythmic patterns.
- **Strengthens fine motor skills** - Scooping, squeezing, and pouring water build hand strength and control.
- **Encourages language (“splash!”, “pour”, “drip”)** - Water play naturally invites fun sound words and action words that boost early vocabulary.

# SOFT TOY BAND

## HOW TO PLAY:

- Give soft toys “instruments” (rattle, shaker, plastic cup, rice container)
- Provide safe, easy-to-hold objects so children can explore making different sounds.
- Pretend the toys are playing music
- Encourage imaginative play by having the toys “perform,” which sparks creativity and storytelling.
- Toddler conducts: “Go! Stop!”
- Let the child lead the play, practicing self-control, timing, and early executive function skills through starting and stopping the music

## VARIATIONS:

- **Change the instruments** - Use spoons on pots, wooden blocks, or even paper shakers to create new sounds.
- **Different tempos** - Have the toddler lead with fast, slow, or mixed rhythms instead of just “go/stop.”
- **Add emotions** - Pretend the toys are playing “happy music” or “sad music,” encouraging expressive play.
- **Group play** - Include siblings or caregivers so each “toy” has its own sound, teaching cooperation and listening.
- **Call-and-response** - The toddler “conducts” and the toys (or you) echo the sounds or rhythms, reinforcing attention and imitation.



## DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS:

- **Boosts imagination** - Children create their own stories, sounds, and actions, fostering creativity.
- **Teaches start-stop control (executive function)** - Practicing when to begin or pause an action helps develop self-control and planning skills.
- **Encourages pretend play** - Acting out scenarios with sounds or movements strengthens role-playing and symbolic thinking.
- **Supports emotional expression -** Using sounds, gestures, or movements allows children to express feelings in a safe, playful way.

# SNOW AND CARS

## WHATS NEEDED:

Super simple and quick setup—great for keeping kids busy.

- Flour
- Cars
- Tray

Options - add cooking oil to make the flour pliable.

## WHAT TO DO:

- Add flour to a large container or tuff tray.
- Include cars or trucks for digging, driving, and exploring.
- Encourages imaginative and sensory play.

## BENEFITS:

- Flour is naturally inviting—soft, smooth, and fun to touch.
- It's perfect for creating varied textures with just a few added elements.
- Flour sensory bins offer endless play possibilities and never lose their appeal.
- This is super simple to set up, easy to clean, and always worth the mess!
- Taste Safe



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Gathered a few supplies, such as measuring spoons, a slotted spoon, and a can strainer, and let them play.
- Trace letters/numbers/shapes
- Hand prints
- This activity could be switched up with several alternate ingredients, i.e., rice, sand, playdough, etc
- You play hide and seek, hiding small objects inside and getting your child to find them.

# FLOATING FLOWERS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Flowers
- Water
- Additional bowls, tongs and spoons etc
- Glitter for extra effect or anything else you might want to add
- Food coluring or paint to change the colour of the water

## WHAT TO DO:

- Use real, dried, or artificial flowers—just add water and utensils for open-ended floral fun.
- Try freezing petals in ice cube trays or muffin tins for an extra sensory twist!

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages nature appreciation and exploration
- See colors and shapes, smell flowers, feel textures
- Use spoons to build hand-eye coordination and control
- Practice fine motor skills with tongs for picking and transferring



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children:** Focus on simple scooping and floating play.
- **For older children:** Add counting, sorting, or pattern-making with the flowers.
- **Add tools:** Use spoons, tweezers, or cups to strengthen fine motor skills.
- **Color exploration:** Encourage sorting flowers by color, size, or type.
- **Imaginative play:** Turn it into a flower shop, potion lab, or garden scene.

# WATER BEADS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Water beads
- Sea animal toys

## WHAT TO DO:

- Just add water—watch them grow and transform
- Colourful, shiny, and fun to touch
- Place in a bin for open-ended exploration
- Add sea animal toys for imaginative play
- Scoop, sort by colour, freeze, or smash in sensory bags
- Great for sensory, fine motor, and creative play

## BENEFITS:

- Soft, squishy, and smooth—great for tactile exploration
- Support fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination
- Encourage creativity and sensory play
- Help with learning colours and texture recognition
- Introduce early science (absorption) and math concepts (size changes, volume)
- Promote curiosity and open-ended play



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Add shaving cream
- Place the beads in cookie cutters
- Add to balloons
- Mix with slime
- Freeze and smash
- Create a mini world sensory

# MELTING INSECTS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Water
- Ice trays
- Miniature figures

## WHAT TO DO:

- Place insect or other figurines into ice cube trays or small plastic containers.
- Fill with water and freeze until solid.
- Once frozen, let kids melt the ice using:
  - Warm water
  - Squeeze bottles or droppers
- Bath play for added fun
- Encourage observation, fine motor skills, and sensory exploration!

## BENEFITS:

- Boosts Curiosity – Sparks interest in science and change through observation.
- Supports Fine Motor Skills – Using droppers, spoons, or salt builds hand control.
- Encourages Sensory Play – Engages touch, sight, and temperature awareness.
- Promotes Problem-Solving – Kids figure out how to "rescue" the insects.
- Develops Language – Talking about melting, cold, and rescue builds vocabulary.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Change the Tools** – Use droppers, spoons, paintbrushes, or salt for melting.
- **Add Color** – Freeze insects in colored water for visual fun.
- **Make It a Race** – Time how fast kids can melt the ice.
- **Swap the Theme** – Try dinosaurs, animals, or letters instead of insects.
- **Try Different Temps** – Offer warm vs. cold water for experimentation.

# STRESS BALL

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Balloons
- Rice
- Funnel
- Googley eyes
- Pipe cleaners
- Coloured paper

## WHAT TO DO:

- Gather balloons, funnel, and filler (flour, rice, etc.).
- Stretch balloon for easier filling.
- Fill using a funnel, then tie securely.
- Double-layer for strength.
- Let kids squeeze and explore.
- Supervise for safety.

## BENEFITS:

- Helps relieve anxiety and stress
- Supports sensory regulation
- Improves hand strength and fine motor skills
- Encourages focus and calmness
- Provides tactile sensory input for self-soothing



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Change Textures** – Use different fillings like rice, flour, sand, or gel for sensory variety.
- **Cool Sensation** – Chill the ball in the fridge for a calming, cool touch.
- **Target Games** – Toss at targets to combine gross motor skills with stress relief.
- **Squeeze Challenges** – Encourage timed or patterned squeezes for coordination.
- **Emotion Play** – Draw faces on stress balls to support emotional expression.

# POSTING & FINDING

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Oats (sensory base)
- Shallow tray or container
- Small postable items (e.g., large buttons or wooden discs)
- Container with a slot
- Scoops or spoons
- Optional: tweezers or tongs for added challenge

## WHAT TO DO:

- Fill the tray with oats and place the posting container nearby.
- Invite children to post the objects into the slot.
- Encourage them to search through the oats to find the hidden items.
- Use hands, scoops, or tools to retrieve the pieces and repeat.

## BENEFITS:

- Strengthens fine motor skills and pincer grip
- Develops hand-eye coordination
- Encourages problem-solving and persistence
- Supports sensory regulation through tactile play
- Builds early math skills like counting and sorting
- Promotes focus and independent play



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children:** Use larger objects for easier grasping.
- **For older children:** Add counting challenges or color sorting tasks.
- **For extra fine motor work:** Use tweezers or tongs to retrieve items.
- **For themed learning:** Swap objects to match a theme (e.g., letters, numbers, animals, seasonal shapes).
- **For sensory preferences:** Substitute oats with rice, lentils, sand, or pom-poms.

# MONSTER SCOOP & FEED

## WHATS NEEDED:

- A monster cut-out with an open mouth (attached to a box or container)
- Sensory base (rice, oats, lentils, pasta, or pom-poms)
- Tray
- Scoops
- Optional: funnels, tongs, or measuring cups
- Mat

## WHAT TO DO:

- Fill the tray with your chosen sensory base.
- Place the monster container nearby.
- Invite children to scoop the material and “feed” it into the monster’s mouth.
- Encourage repeated scooping, pouring, and refilling for extended play.
- Add simple challenges like “Feed the monster 5 scoops!”

## BENEFITS:

- Develops fine motor skills and hand strength
- Improves hand-eye coordination
- Encourages focus and concentration
- Builds early math skills (counting, measuring)
- Supports sensory exploration and regulation
- Sparks imaginative play and storytelling



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children:** Use larger scoops and bigger sensory materials.
- **For older children:** Introduce counting tasks, color sorting, or timed challenges.
- **For extra fine motor work:** Use tongs or smaller spoons.
- **For themed learning:** Change the monster theme (hungry dinosaur, animal, seasonal character).
- **For sensory needs:** Swap bases to suit preferences (dry, soft, lightweight, or textured materials).

# WATER PLAY/MARK MAKING

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Sponge (as tools)
- Sugar paper (Use washable or sugar paper to enhance visibility of marks.)
- Water

## WHAT TO DO:

- Let your child explore water freely
- Encourage mark making on sugar paper with sponges, fingers, hands, or feet
- Supports creativity and sensory exploration
- Promotes gross motor development through full-body movement

## BENEFITS:

- Enhances creativity and pre-writing skills
- Builds fine motor and coordination skills
- Encourages sensory exploration
- Teaches cause and effect
- Promotes focus and calm
- Sparks imaginative play

## NOTES:

- Great for both fine and gross motor skill development.
- Encourage exploration with hands, feet, and tools like sponges or brushes.
- Ideal for indoor or outdoor sensory play with minimal cleanup.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Add sponges for squeezing, soaking, and splashing fun
- Colour the water with food coloring to make play more visually engaging
- Include toys like balls, rings, or plastic figures for imaginative and manipulative play
- Freeze water with objects or color to create an icy sensory experience
- Add a dish brush for pretend washing and role-play activities

# FABRIC & TEXTURE EXPLORATIONS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Textured fabrics: silk, cotton, velvet, wool, burlap, chiffon, felt
- Optional loose/natural parts: sticks, pinecones, stones, leaves, feathers
- Baskets or trays for sorting by texture or colour
- Low table, floor mat, or soft area for spreading fabrics
- Optional props: small toys or figurines for hiding under fabrics

## WHAT TO DO:

- Lay fabrics flat, draped, or overlapping.
- Let children explore: touch, crumple, squeeze, or rub.
- Encourage draping fabrics to make dens, tents, or clothing.
- Hide objects under fabrics for discovery play.
- Combine fabrics with loose parts for patterns or imaginative scenes.
- Keep play open-ended; follow the child's lead.
- Observe and comment on their discoveries.

## BENEFITS:

- **Sensory Development:** Explore different textures to enhance touch perception.
- **Fine Motor Skills:** Handling, folding, and crumpling fabrics strengthen hands and fingers.
- **Imaginative Play:** Create dens, clothing, or story scenes to boost creativity.
- **Cognitive Skills:** Sort by colour, texture, or size to develop classification skills.
- **Language Development:** Name textures, colours, and actions to grow vocabulary.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Age-Friendly:** Use larger, soft fabrics for toddlers; smaller or varied textures for older children.
- **Sensory Variety:** Include materials like velvet, silk, burlap, corduroy, bubble wrap, and textured ribbons.
- **Indoor/Outdoor:** Explore on a mat indoors or in a garden for added sensory experiences.
- **Theme-Based:** Focus on colors, patterns, or seasonal textures.
- **Exploration Methods:** Encourage rubbing, folding, tearing, layering, or arranging fabrics.
- **Combine with Other Activities:** Use for collages, storytelling props, or loose-parts play.

# RECYCLED LOOSE PARTS CONSTRUCTION

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Recycled materials: cardboard tubes (toilet rolls, paper towel tubes), jar lids, small boxes, egg cartons, milk cartons
- Loose parts: wooden blocks, corks, bottle caps, fabric scraps
- Basic tools: masking tape, washi tape, rubber bands (optional)
- A flat, safe play surface (floor mat, low table, or tray)

## WHAT TO DO:

- Place recycled items and loose parts on the play surface.
- Let children stack, balance, or arrange into towers, ramps, bridges, or tunnels.
- Encourage experimenting with shapes and structures without instructions.
- Observe problem-solving when structures fall or don't balance.
- Allow combining materials in new ways, like adding blocks to a tube ramp.
- Revisit, rebuild, or modify structures over time.

## BENEFITS:

- **Spatial Awareness:** Learn balance, gravity, and spatial relationships through stacking and arranging.
- **Problem-Solving Skills:** Trial and error, perseverance, & creative thinking.
- **Creativity & Imagination:** Invent structures and stories with open-ended materials.
- **Fine Motor Development:** Grasping & stacking strengthen hand-eye coordination.
- **Cognitive Skills:** Explore shapes, sizes, weight, and cause-and-effect.




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Adjust complexity: simple stacking for younger children, intricate structures for older kids
- Encourage both individual and group projects to foster collaboration
- Combine with other materials like tape, glue, or string for added stability
- Explore indoors or outdoors, depending on space and mess level
- Allow open-ended play to inspire creativity and problem-solving

# CONSTRUCTION PLAY

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Blocks
- Planks
- Boxes
- Natural materials

Sharing a vanity of materials helps children negotiate, communicate, and work together toward a common goal.

## WHAT TO DO:

- Arrange a variety of materials—blocks, planks, boxes, sticks, fabrics—like a buffet of possibilities.
- Give children space to explore, experiment, and decide how to build without adult direction.
- Towers wobble, bridges span gaps, and tiny worlds emerge as imagination and problem-solving take over.
- Every creation, even collapsed or sideways, is a learning moment full of creativity, persistence, and collaboration.

## BENEFITS:

- **Spatial awareness:** Children learn size, distance, and balance as they stack blocks and fit shapes together—building a foundation for math and problem-solving.
- **Perseverance:** Towers may fall, but children learn to try, adjust, and keep going, building patience and resilience.
- **Confidence:** Successfully creating—even small wins—boosts self-belief, decision-making, and a sense of agency.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Add fabrics, connectors, or props:** Scarves, ribbons, pegs, or small toys spark imagination, turn structures into tents, bridges, or rivers, and encourage storytelling and role-play.
- **Revisit builds over multiple days:** Let children modify or expand structures later, promoting planning, problem-solving, persistence, and understanding cause-and-effect.

# CURIOSITY TRAY

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Tray
- 4–6 intriguing objects:
- Magnifier
- Shell
- Keys
- Feather

## WHAT TO DO:

- Present tray attractively: Arrange objects thoughtfully at child height, with visual appeal to spark interest.
- Give no instructions: Allow children to explore without guidance, letting curiosity drive engagement.
- Allow repeated visits: Keep the tray accessible over time so children can revisit, compare, and deepen understanding.
- Encourage gentle observation and wonder; do not interfere or redirect.

## BENEFITS:

- **Independent thinking:** Children choose what and how to explore, building autonomy and confidence.
- **Sustained attention:** Freedom to investigate at their own pace supports focus and engagement.
- **Problem-solving:** Manipulating objects helps children discover cause-and-effect and try new ideas.
- **Imagination and curiosity:** Repeated exploration sparks creativity, storytelling, and ongoing wonder.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Rotate Objects:** Change one or two items in the activity regularly to keep children curious and engaged, preventing the play from becoming repetitive.
- **Add Question Cards:** For older children, include cards with prompts or questions to encourage observation, critical thinking, and deeper inquiry about the objects or materials.
- **Themed Trays:** Organize materials around a theme that connects to children's current interests, seasons, or classroom topics, making exploration more meaningful and relevant.

# LIGHT & SHADOW PLAY

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Flashlights, torches, or desk lamps
- Mirrors, coloured cellophane, or transparent coloured sheets
- Opaque objects (to create shadows)
- Walls or a blank surface for projecting shadows
- Optional: cardboard or paper to create shadow puppets

## WHAT TO DO:

- Shine a flashlight or torch on an opaque object to create a shadow on a wall.
- Move the object closer or farther from the light source to observe changes in size and sharpness.
- Rotate/tilt the object to see how the shadow shifts.
- Introduce mirrors or coloured cellophane to explore reflections and coloured shadows.
- Encourage children to create stories or scenes using their shadows, experimenting with multiple objects and lights.

## BENEFITS:

- **Physics & Science Concepts:** Children learn about light, reflection, refraction, and how shadows form and move.
- **Observation Skills:** Noticing changes in shape, size, and direction of shadows as objects or light sources are moved.
- **Problem-Solving & Experimentation:** Children experiment with angles, distances, and materials to see how shadows change.
- **Fine Motor Skills:** Manipulating objects and puppets develops hand-eye coordination.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use different light sources (flashlight, lamp, sunlight)
- Try various objects or cut-out shapes for shadows
- Explore indoors or outdoors
- Adjust distance and angles for bigger or smaller shadows
- Encourage storytelling or creative play with shadow shapes

# TRANSIENT ART

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Loose parts: natural items (leaves, stones, sticks, flowers) or everyday objects (buttons, beads, fabric scraps, shells)
- Flat surface: table, tray, floor mat, or outdoor space
- Optional: trays or boards to define the workspace

## WHAT TO DO:

- Let children arrange loose parts into patterns, shapes, or pictures.
- Emphasize that the art is temporary—no glue needed.
- Encourage experimenting with color, texture, and form.
- Allow independent or collaborative play.
- Explore symmetry, balance, repetition, and patterns.
- Step back and offer prompts only if asked.
- Photograph creations to preserve memories before dismantling.

## BENEFITS:

- Fosters creativity, imagination, and experimentation.
- Develops fine motor skills through handling small objects.
- Encourages independence and decision-making.
- Teaches impermanence and flexibility—learning to enjoy the process rather than the product.
- Supports problem-solving and spatial awareness.
- Promotes collaboration and communication when done in groups.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Photograph creations to revisit or inspire future projects.
- Recreate or expand on previous designs over multiple sessions.
- Introduce themed challenges: shapes, colors, seasons, or letters.
- Combine with storytelling: create scenes or characters from loose parts.
- Adapt outdoors using natural elements only, allowing exploration of textures and patterns in the environment.

# DECONSTRUCTED TOY PLAY

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Old toys safe to take apart (mechanical, simple electronic, building sets)
- Age-appropriate tools (screwdrivers, wrenches, tweezers, magnifying glasses)
- Trays or containers to organize parts
- Optional: notebooks or clipboards for sketches or labeling
- Optional: gloves or protective mats

## WHAT TO DO:

- Let children carefully take apart toys or objects to explore mechanisms.
- Encourage gentle handling, patience, and observation of connections.
- Prompt curiosity: “What happens if we move this?” or “How does this gear work?”
- Allow experimenting with rearranging, combining, or observing pieces.
- Encourage documenting discoveries through drawing, photos, or labeling.
- Offer optional rebuilding challenges or creating something new.

## BENEFITS:

- Develops engineering thinking and mechanical understanding.
- Strengthens problem-solving, critical thinking, and fine motor skills.
- Encourages curiosity, observation, and experimentation.
- Builds resilience and patience through trial-and-error exploration.
- Supports creativity and imagination when combining parts in new ways.
- Encourages communication and collaboration in group settings.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use safe household objects like old clocks, simple appliances, or kitchen gadgets.
- Turn deconstruction into a challenge: rebuild it exactly, create a new invention, or redesign the parts.
- Focus on specific mechanical concepts: gears, levers, pulleys, or simple circuits.
- Rotate toys and objects regularly to maintain novelty and curiosity.

# MYSTERY OBJECT BAG

## WHATS NEEDED:

- A cloth bag, opaque container, or pillowcase to hide objects
- One hidden object per round (safe, interesting items like a pinecone, toy, fruit, or textured object)
- Optional: multiple bags for group play
- Optional: paper and crayons or markers for drawing or recording predictions

## WHAT TO DO:

- Place one object inside the bag
- Invite children to reach in and explore the object using only their sense of touch.
- Encourage them to describe what they feel: texture, shape, temperature, size, or weight.
- Prompt them to guess what the object might be based on tactile exploration.
- After guessing, reveal the object and discuss observations.

## BENEFITS:

- Develops descriptive language and vocabulary.
- Strengthens sensory awareness, observation, and tactile exploration.
- Builds confidence and pride in exploration and discovery.
- Encourages curiosity, imagination, and critical thinking.
- Promotes social interaction and turn-taking in group settings.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Rotate objects regularly to maintain novelty and interest.
- Focus on one sense at a time: touch, sound, or smell.
- Encourage children to draw, label, or write their guesses and observations.
- Combine with related activities, like sorting objects by texture, size, or shape.
- Use themed objects to tie in with seasonal topics or ongoing learning projects.
- Extend the activity by letting children take turns hiding objects for others to explore.

# SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Basic household items: vinegar, baking soda, food coloring, water, containers, spoons, measuring cups
- Objects for sink or float tests: plastic toys, coins, corks, leaves, small stones
- Optional: magnifying glasses, droppers, funnels, trays
- Safety materials: aprons, gloves, or mats/newspapers to contain spills

## WHAT TO DO:

- Vinegar + Baking Soda Volcano: Combine and observe fizzing.
- Sink or Float: Test objects in water and predict outcomes.
- Color Mixing: Mix water and food coloring to explore changes.
- Magnet Play: Test which objects magnets attract.
- Encourage predictions before experiments.
- Ask open-ended questions: “What do you notice?” “Why do you think this happened?”

## BENEFITS:

- Develops critical thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving skills.
- Encourages scientific inquiry, observation, and experimentation.
- Supports language development through discussion and explanation.
- Builds fine motor skills and coordination during hands-on activities.
- Fosters persistence and resilience by testing hypotheses and learning from results.
- Promotes curiosity, wonder, and a sense of discovery.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use different household materials to vary experiments.
- Focus on one sense at a time: sight, touch, or hearing (e.g., listening to fizzing, feeling textures).
- Conduct experiments outdoors for messier activities.
- Allow children to design their own experiments or modify existing ones.

# MINI INVESTIGATIONS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- A simple question to investigate (e.g., “Do plants grow faster in the sun or shade?”)
- Everyday materials related to the question (plants, soil, water, containers, objects to compare)
- A way to record observations: paper, clipboard, chart, photos, or drawings
- Optional: ruler, measuring tape, or calendar to track changes over time

## WHAT TO DO:

- Choose one clear, child-friendly question to investigate.
- Make predictions and discuss what might happen and why.
- Set up the investigation (e.g., sun vs shade).
- Observe regularly over time, noticing changes.
- Record findings with drawings, marks, photos, or simple words.
- Revisit the question and discuss what stays the same or changes.

## BENEFITS:

- Builds scientific thinking and understanding of cause and effect.
- Encourages patience, persistence, and sustained attention.
- Develops observation, recording, and comparison skills.
- Strengthens language as children explain ideas and discoveries.
- Boosts confidence and ownership of learning through child-led inquiry.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Keep investigations very short for younger children (daily observations for a few days).
- Let children choose the question to increase engagement.
- Use photos instead of writing for early learners.
- Extend learning by changing one variable and starting a new investigation.
- Link investigations to real-life interests like weather, plants, water, or animals.
- Reflect together on discoveries and new questions.

# DANCE AND FREEZE

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Music player or songs
- Open space
- Optional: musical instruments or scarves for movement

## WHAT TO DO:

- Play music and encourage children to dance and move freely.
- Stop the music at random moments.
- When the music stops, children must freeze in place.
- Restart the music and repeat the activity...

## BENEFITS:

- Builds gross motor skills
- Improves listening and attention
- Develops self-control and body awareness
- Encourages rhythm and timing skills
- Supports emotional regulation
- Boosts confidence and creativity




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with slow music and longer dance times.
- Use clear visual cues along with music stops.
- Add simple movements to copy before dancing freely.
- Introduce themed dances (animals, superheroes, nature).
- Allow children to lead and choose dance moves.

# BALL ROLL & CHASE

## WHATS NEEDED:

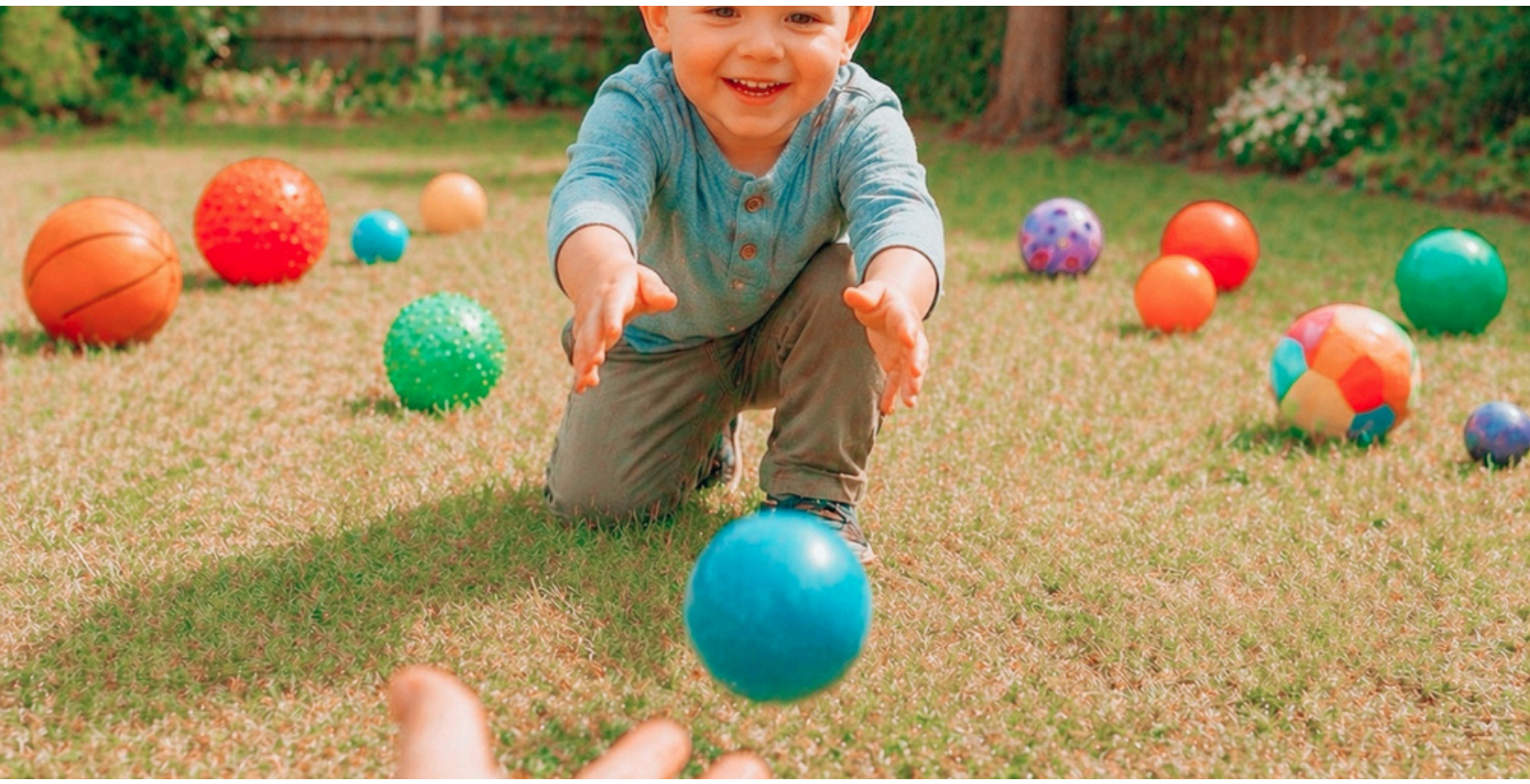
- Soft balls of different sizes
- Open space (indoor or outdoor)
- Optional: cones or markers to guide rolling direction

## WHAT TO DO:

- Sit or stand facing the child.
- Roll a ball gently towards them.
- Encourage them to roll it back or chase it.
- Repeat the back-and-forth rolling and retrieving.

## BENEFITS:

- Builds gross motor skills
- Improves hand-eye coordination
- Develops coordination and timing
- Encourages turn-taking and social skills
- Strengthens focus and attention
- Supports active movement and energy release



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with slow, close rolling for beginners.
- Use larger, softer balls for easier control.
- Increase distance as skills improve.
- Add targets or goals to roll the ball into.
- Play with multiple children for group turn-taking.

# JUMP LIKE ANIMALS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Open play space
- Animal picture cards or toy animals (optional)
- Music for movement fun (optional)

## TIPS:

- Take breaks if they get tired (little legs, big effort!)
- Repeat favourite animals—toddlers love repetition

## WHAT TO DO:

- Name an animal and show how it moves.
- Invite children to copy the movement.
- Jump like a frog, stomp like an elephant, waddle like a duck, or slither like a snake.
- Take turns choosing animals to act out.

## BENEFITS:

- Builds gross motor skills
- Strengthens balance and coordination
- Develops body awareness
- Encourages listening and following directions
- Supports imagination and pretend play
- Builds strength, confidence, and movement control
- Introduces animal vocabulary and action words



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with two or three simple animals.
- Use pictures for children to choose movements.
- Add sounds and animal stories for extra fun.
- Create an animal movement obstacle course for more challenge.

# CRAWL AND EXPLORE

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Tunnels, boxes, or chairs to crawl through
- Blankets or cushions for forts
- Soft toys or objects to hide
- Open safe space

## WHAT TO DO:

- Set up a crawling path or tunnel.
- Encourage children to crawl through and explore.
- Hide a toy for them to find along the way.
- Let them repeat and explore in different ways like crawling races or fort play.

## BENEFITS:

- Builds gross motor strength
- Improves coordination and balance
- Develops spatial awareness
- Encourages problem-solving and exploration
- Supports curiosity and confidence
- Enhances focus and persistence



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with short, open tunnels.
- Keep spaces wide and easy to access.
- Add simple “find and collect” tasks.
- Create themes like jungle crawl or rescue mission.
- Allow free crawling for younger toddlers without structured tasks.

# PUSH AND PULL PLAY

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Toy carts, push toys, or walkers
- Pull-along toys with strings
- Light boxes, baskets, or objects to move
- Open indoor or outdoor space

## WHAT TO DO:

- Show children how to push toys forward and pull toys along a path.
- Encourage them to move objects from one place to another.
- Let them explore pushing and pulling in different directions.
- Repeat and allow free play with the materials.

## BENEFITS:

- Builds gross motor strength
- Improves coordination and balance
- Develops spatial awareness
- Supports cause-and-effect understanding
- Encourages independence and confidence
- Enhances problem-solving skills



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with lightweight toys for easy movement.
- Keep distances short for beginners.
- Add simple goals like moving toys to a “home base.”
- Increase challenge with longer paths or slightly heavier objects.
- Introduce themed play (delivery driver, shopping, rescue mission)..

# LITTLE BALANCE CHALLENGE

## WHATS NEEDED:

Ideas for balancing:

- Balance Board
- Masking tape or chalk line
- Cushions, pillows, or foam mats
- Floor markers
- Any type of stepping stones
- Open, safe space

## WHAT TO DO:

- Create a line or stepping path on the floor.
- Show children how to walk slowly along it.
- Encourage them to step on cushions or marked spots.
- Support them as they balance and move carefully.

## BENEFITS:

- Improves balance and coordination
- Builds core strength and body control
- Develops focus and concentration
- Enhances spatial awareness
- Encourages confidence in movement
- Supports gross motor development



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with wide, straight lines.
- Use soft, stable surfaces for beginners.
- Add turns, zigzags, or stepping gaps for challenge.
- Hold a hand or offer support if needed.
- Turn it into a fun theme like “bridge crossing” or “adventure path.”

# BUBBLE WRAP PRINTING

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Bubble wrap (small or large pieces)
- Paint (tempera, acrylic, or watercolour)
- Paper (thicker paper works best to avoid tearing)
- Rollers, brushes, or even fingers for painting
- Scissors (optional, for cutting shapes)
- Smocks or protective covering

## WHAT TO DO:

- Cut bubble wrap to a manageable size or into fun shapes (circles, stars, hearts).
- Apply paint to the bubble side using a roller, brush, or fingers.
- Press the painted bubble wrap gently onto paper and lift to reveal textured prints.
- Repeat with different colours, overlapping prints, or rotating the bubble wrap for varied patterns.
- Allow the artwork to dry fully.

## BENEFITS:

- Pattern Recognition: Spot repeating shapes and textures
- Sensory Play: Engage tactile senses by feeling the bubbles
- Creativity & Expression: Experiment with colours, layers, and shapes
- Fine Motor Skills: Strengthen hand-eye coordination using brushes or rollers
- Early Experimentation: Learn cause-and-effect through paint and pressure variations



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **3D Art:** Press bubble wrap onto soft clay or playdough instead of paper to explore textures in sculptural work.
- **Storytelling:** Encourage children to turn their textured prints into scenes or backgrounds for a story.
- **Combination Materials:** Add glitter, stamping, or stamping with other found objects for more complex textures.

# ICE PAINTING

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Ice cube trays
- Water
- Food colouring (or liquid watercolours)
- Paper (thicker paper works best to prevent warping)
- Tray or plate to contain drips
- Optional: small toys, glitter, or salt for added texture

## WHAT TO DO:

- Mix water with food colouring and pour into ice cube trays. Freeze until solid.
- Place a piece of paper on a tray to catch drips.
- Remove coloured ice cubes and encourage children to “paint” on the paper as the ice melts.
- Observe how the colours spread, blend, and change as the ice melts.
- Discuss what is happening to the ice and how it transforms from solid to liquid.

## BENEFITS:

- Cause-and-Effect Learning: Children see how the ice melts and moves across the paper, connecting actions to outcomes.
- Science Exploration: Introduces concepts like temperature, states of matter (solid to liquid), and melting.
- Fine Motor Skills: Holding and manipulating ice cubes strengthens grip and hand-eye coordination.
- Sensory Play: The cold sensation of ice adds a tactile element to painting.
- Creativity & Expression



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Age-Friendly:** Bigger ice for toddlers, smaller or shaped ice for older kids.
- **Indoor/Outdoor:** Outdoors for messy fun; indoors with trays to catch melting water.
- **Themed Colors & Shapes:** Holiday colors, seasonal pastels, or fun molds like stars and hearts.
- **Different Surfaces:** Paper, cardstock, fabric, or windows for creative effects.
- **Mixed Media:** Combine with stamping, sponges, or layered colors for texture.

# POTATO PRINTING

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Potatoes
- Knife and or cutters
- Chopping board
- Paint
- Paper
- Brush (optional)

## WHAT TO DO:

- Materials: Potatoes, knife (adult use), child-safe paints, trays, paper
- Prepare Potatoes: Cut in half; leave natural shapes or carve simple patterns
- Paint: Pour colors into shallow trays
- Stamp: Dip the potato in the paint and press it onto the paper
- Experiment: Layer colors, mix patterns, repeat designs
- Clean Up: Wipe potatoes and use paper towels
- Enjoy: Let prints dry and display artwork

## BENEFITS:

- A tried and tested classic! Painting with potato stamps is lots of fun and cheap and easy to do at home. Toddlers and preschoolers will love getting their hands messy and creating some great pieces of art.
- Stamps are also good for:
- Fostering creativity and sense of achievement
- Developing hand-eye coordination
- Exploring emotions and feelings



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Age-Friendly:** Toddlers can use whole potato halves for easy stamping; older kids can carve more detailed shapes or patterns.
- **Indoor/Outdoor:** Indoors with trays or newspaper to catch paint; outdoors for messier, bigger stamping fun.
- **Different Shapes & Patterns:** Try stars, hearts, stripes, or seasonal shapes like leaves or pumpkins.
- **Mix Colors:** Layer multiple colors or dip different potatoes in different paints for variety.

# SPONGE PRINTING

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Sponges
- Paint
- Paper
- Scissors

## WHAT TO DO:

- Use sponges in their natural shapes or cut into fun designs (stars, hearts, circles, animals)
- Dip sponges into paint or watercolors, coating evenly
- Press or stamp sponges onto paper to create prints
- Experiment with layering colors and combining shapes
- Encourage patterns, textures, and creative exploration

## BENEFITS:

- Self-expression with paint
- Eye and hand coordination
- Fine motor development
- Experimenting and exploring with a new paint tool
- Sense of achievement and pride
- Colour recognition
- Sensory experience of exploring paint and paint filled sponges.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use pre-cut large, chunky sponge shapes (circles, squares) to make gripping easier.
- Skip scissors entirely—provide ready-to-use sponges to avoid safety risks.
- Use washable finger paints or thick tempera paint for mess-friendly exploration; let kids press with whole hands if gripping is hard.
- Lay paper on the floor to allow crawling or standing work, supporting gross motor movement.

# LEAF PRINTING

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Paper
- Leaves
- Paint
- Paint brushes

An open-ended art activity like this provides lots of fun and learning for younger children.

## WHAT TO DO:

- **Collect Leaves:** Choose a variety of leaves with different shapes and sizes **from the park or garden.**
- **Prepare Paint:** Set out a few paint colors and a large paintbrush.
- **Paint the Leaves:** Brush paint onto one side of the leaf, gently covering the surface.
- **Print on Paper:** Press the painted leaf onto white paper and lift it carefully to reveal the print.
- **Encourage Creativity:** Let your child decide how many leaves to use, which colors to choose, and where to place their prints.

## BENEFITS:

- Picking the leaves uses the child's whole body & gets them active & exploring outside.
- They will learn about leaf shapes and colours. You can make observations about colour blending etc
- A lovely way to introduce your child to nature and talk about trees and where leaves come from.
- Coordination to hold the leaves and carefully turn them over to print them so this will fine-tune fine motor skills and improve concentration.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Draw on the paper a tree trunk and branches so the children can print the leaves on the branches to create a tree.
- Paint over and around the leaf and then peel off.
- Paint a rainbow on the leaf and then print.

# STRAW PAINTING

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Non-toxic liquid paint (watered down slightly for easier blowing)
- Paper or cardstock
- Plastic straws
- Something for mixing colours
- Aprons or old clothes
- Optional: Eye droppers or spoons for dripping paint, washable table covering

## WHATO DO:

- Set out your paper
- Add small blobs or drops of paint onto the paper
- Hand your child a straw and encourage them to blow through it (not suck!) to move the paint around the paper.
- Watch the colours mix, swirl, splatter, and streak — no two masterpieces are ever the same!
- Let the artwork dry completely before displaying or framing.

## BENEFITS:

- Builds oral motor strength (important for speech development!)
- Boosts fine motor control and coordination
- Encourages creativity and experimentation
- Supports colour recognition and cause-and-effect understanding
- Sensory-rich and super engaging



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use food colouring and water for a taste-safe version (for younger toddlers)
- Add glitter or soap bubbles for extra texture and sparkle
- Try it on black paper for a bold twist
- Turn it into a science lesson by talking about air pressure and movement
- Cut the dry artwork into shapes or collage pieces for a second round of crafting

# NATURE PATTERNS

## WHATS NEEDED:

All you need is nature loose parts and some imagination (or prompt cards to help)

(Optional) Take photos or create a temporary nature mural to showcase their work.

## WHAT TO DO:

- Gather leaves, flowers, stones, sticks, or other natural items.
- Look at shapes, colors, sizes, and textures; sort them if needed.
- Arrange items in repeating sequences (AB, AAB, ABC, etc.) or symmetrical designs.
- Encourage children to experiment, swap items, or make new patterns.
- Talk about what they notice —colors, shapes, textures— and connect it to nature.

## BENEFITS:

- Using natural materials to create patterns helps children appreciate the beauty and importance of the environment.
- Encourages environmental stewardship, a desire to protect nature, and a connection to the natural world.
- Engages children's senses.
- Observing differences between leaves & flowers, etc., sharpens attention to detail.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Age:** Toddlers – big leaves/pinecones; Preschoolers – simple patterns; Older kids – complex designs/storytelling.
- **Abilities:** Use tweezers for fine motor support; tactile/scented materials for sensory needs; guided templates for learning support.
- **Setting:** Indoors – trays or paper; Outdoors – garden/park patterns; Groups – collaborative "nature murals."
- **Materials:** Seasonal leaves/flowers/pinecones; recycled items like bottle caps or sticks

# NATURE PORTRAITS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Leafs
- Sticks
- Stones
- Flowers
- Anything goes so whatever can be forages

## WHAT TO DO:

- First go out into nature and collect anything you can find.
- When back home spread all the items collected on the table or floor and now the fun begins.
- Your child can then arrange all the different loose parts on the template provided below, of course you don't need a template, you can also simply draw a circle on a piece of paper and then let them do the rest.

## BENEFITS:

- Sparks creativity and self-expression using natural materials.
- Builds fine motor and observation skills.
- Encourages calm focus and mindfulness.
- Promotes appreciation for nature and sustainability.
- Inspires storytelling and imaginative play.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger kids:** limit materials and use trays for easy setup.
- **For older kids:** try self-portraits or themed challenges.
- **Seasonal fun:** swap flowers, leaves, or sticks based on what's available.
- **Group version:** create a "Nature Gallery" display.
- **Indoors:** Use photos of your arrangements for rainy-day art.

# NATURE CROWNS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Flexible cardboard
- Masking tape
- Glue gun or normal glue but not quite as strong
- Nature Items: pine cones, acorns, leaves, bark, twigs, pine needles etc.

## WHAT TO DO:

- Measure the head, cut a cardboard strip, and tape or glue it into a circle.
- Gather leaves, flowers, twigs, pinecones, or other natural items, noticing colors and textures.
- Arrange and glue items onto the crown. Let dry.
- Optional Touches: Add ribbons, feathers, or recycled items and encourage imaginative play.

## BENEFITS:

- Sparks creativity and self-expression through unique crown designs.
- Encourages imaginative play (kings, fairies, etc.).
- Develops fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.
- Engages the senses with different textures, colors, and smells.
- Problem-solving and environmental awareness.
- Supports social skills when done in groups.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Age:** Toddlers – large, easy-to-handle items; Older kids – intricate designs or storytelling crowns.
- **Abilities:** Use tweezers, pre-cut pieces, or tactile templates for support.
- **Setting:** Indoors – trays or headbands; Outdoors – fresh natural materials; Groups – collaborative crowns.
- **Materials:** Seasonal items (leaves, flowers, pinecones) or recycled bits (paper, fabric, ribbon).

# NATURE BRACELETS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Sellotape (any width will work)
- A safe outdoor space (garden, park, community area)
- Curious little hands!

**Skill level tweaks:**
For little ones, focus on big, easy-to-grab items. For older kids, encourage pattern-making or colour themes.

## WHAT TO DO:

- Wrap a strip of sellotape loosely around your child's wrist, sticky side out.
- Go on a nature treasure hunt—look for leaves, petals, seeds, small twigs, feathers, or anything interesting that's already fallen on the ground.
- Press each item gently onto the sticky bracelet to create a one-of-a-kind nature cuff.

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages observation and curiosity
- Teaches care and respect for nature
- Works fine motor skills
- Sparks conversations about colours, textures & seasons
- Language development - Turn it into a challenge or game: "Find something red!" "Can you get one smooth thing and one bumpy thing?" "Let's see how many different shades of green we can collect!"



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Change up the "bracelet" base:
- Use coloured masking tape instead of clear sellotape for a pop of colour.
- Swap tape for a paper strip + glue stick if you want a less sticky option.
- Create a headband or crown instead of a bracelet for a bigger canvas.
- Seasonal variations: Spring: Flowers, petals, soft new leaves. Summer: Bright blooms, tiny shells if you're near the beach. Autumn: Crunchy leaves, acorns, seed pods. Winter: Pine needles, small twigs, berries (non-toxic only).

# HAND PRINTS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Coco Powder
- Oil
- Paper

## WHAT TO DO:

- Coat each hand evenly with mud.
- Press your hands firmly onto paper or a flat surface outside.
- Experiment with finger positions, layering, or patterns.
- Gently wash your hands after printing.
- Admire your natural artwork!

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages creativity and self-expression.
- Develops fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.
- Connects children with nature and sensory exploration.
- Sparks imaginative play through patterns and textures.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Age:** Toddlers – Simple prints; Older kids – layered patterns or designs.
- **Abilities:** Use smaller handprints, assist with spreading mud, or provide sensory-friendly mud.
- **Setting:** Indoors – use trays or paper; Outdoors – use ground, sand, or large sheets.
- **Materials:** Mud, soil, or safe sensory clay; optional natural additions like leaves or petals.

# ROCK DROP

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Smooth rocks suitable for painting
- Paints, markers, or other decorating supplies
- Clear sealant (optional, to protect designs outdoors)
- A local park, playground, or safe outdoor area

## WHAT TO DO:

- Paint or draw positive messages, fun designs & patterns on your rocks.
- Seal (Optional): Apply a clear sealant to make your artwork weatherproof.
- Take your rocks to a local park or playground etc
- Place the rocks in visible or fun spots for others to find.
- Children can leave a note encouraging the finder to “pay it forward” by spreading kindness too.

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages creativity and self-expression through art.
- Teaches kindness, generosity, and community awareness.
- Promotes outdoor exploration and connection with nature.
- Builds fine motor skills through painting and decorating.
- Fosters pride and confidence in sharing something special with others.




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Age:** Toddlers – simple colors or stickers; Older kids – detailed designs and messages.
- **Abilities:** Provide larger rocks, pre-painted bases, or templates for easier decorating.
- **Setting:** Indoors – decorate and store rocks until ready to hide; Outdoors – choose safe, public areas.
- **Materials:** Use non-toxic paints or markers; add glitter, stickers, or nature items for extra flair.

# NATURE WANDS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Sticks (smooth and safe to handle)
- Ribbons, yarn, or fabric strips
- Fresh or dried flowers and leaves
- Glue or string (optional for securing items)
- Optional: stickers or safe biodegradable glitter
- Small basket or tray for collecting materials

## WHAT TO DO:

- Go on a nature walk to collect suitable sticks.
- Let children choose decorations like ribbons, flowers, or yarn.
- Wrap, tie, or stick materials onto the wand.
- Encourage children to create stories or pretend play with their wands.
- Allow free and creative decorating without rules.

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages imagination and pretend play
- Develops fine motor skills (wrapping, tying, placing)
- Builds creativity and self-expression
- Strengthens connection with nature
- Supports focus and patience
- Encourages storytelling and language development



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Pre-prepare sticks by cleaning and smoothing edges
- Use larger materials for younger children
- Replace glue with tying for easier handling
- Limit decoration choices to avoid overwhelm
- Assist with wrapping or tying if needed
- Keep it simple and focus on creative exploration rather than perfection

# SHOPPING TRIP PLAY

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Basket, bag, or small trolley
- Toy food, boxes, or safe household items
- Empty containers or play money (optional)
- Optional: labels or simple “shop” setup

## WHAT TO DO:

- Show children how to put items in a basket.
- Encourage them to pretend they are shopping in a store.
- Talk about what they are buying and where they are going.
- Take turns being the shopper and shopkeeper.

## BENEFITS:

- Develops imagination and creativity
- Encourages language and communication skills
- Builds early maths skills (counting, sorting, choosing)
- Supports understanding of real-life experiences
- Improves social and role-play skills
- Encourages decision-making and independence




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with a few simple items.
- Use familiar objects from home.
- Add labels or picture cards for “shop items.”
- Extend play with pretend money or receipts.
- Include family members or toys in the role play.

# STORY ROLE PLAY

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Toy animals, dolls, or figures
- Simple props (blocks, boxes, fabric, mats)
- Open play space
- Optional: story cards or picture prompts

## WHAT TO DO:

- Choose a simple story theme like bedtime, farm life, or a trip.
- Use toys to act out the story step by step.
- Encourage children to move characters and create actions.
- Talk through the story as it happens.

## BENEFITS:

- Develops imagination and creativity
- Encourages language and communication skills
- Builds early storytelling and sequencing skills
- Supports social and emotional understanding
- Improves attention and focus
- Enhances problem-solving and thinking skills




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with very simple stories (2–3 steps).
- Use familiar toys and daily routines.
- Add picture cards for story support.
- Let children change or create their own endings.
- Join in to model simple words and actions.

# DRESS-UP FUN

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Hats, scarves, costumes, or old clothes
- Shoes, bags, or simple accessories
- Mirror (optional)
- Open play space

## WHAT TO DO:

- Invite children to try on different dress-up items.
- Encourage them to pretend to be different people or characters.
- Act out simple roles like a doctor, chef, or superhero.
- Support storytelling while they play.

## BENEFITS:

- Develops imagination and creativity
- Builds confidence and self-expression
- Encourages language and storytelling skills
- Supports social and emotional development
- Enhances role-play and understanding of real-life roles
- Improves communication and interaction skills




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with simple items like hats or scarves.
- Use familiar roles children see in daily life.
- Keep dress-up options safe and easy to wear.
- Add props to support storytelling.
- Let children choose and lead their own roles.

# ANIMAL HOME BUILDING

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Toy animals
- Blocks, boxes, or cardboard pieces
- Fabric, leaves, or paper for decoration (optional)
- Flat surface or play mat

## WHAT TO DO:

- Give children toy animals to care for.
- Encourage them to build homes using blocks or boxes.
- Talk about where each animal might live.
- Let them place animals inside and act out simple stories.

## BENEFITS:

- Develops imagination and creativity
- Encourages problem-solving and planning
- Builds fine motor skills through building and placing
- Supports early understanding of animal habitats
- Improves language and storytelling skills
- Enhances focus and concentration



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with one animal and one simple structure.
- Use large blocks or boxes for easy building.
- Add natural materials for decoration.
- Introduce different habitats (farm, jungle, home).
- Join in to model simple building ideas and language.

# ANIMAL FRIENDS ADVENTURE

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Toy animals (farm, jungle, or pets)
- Small props like blocks, mats, or boxes
- Optional: trees, fences, or natural items

## WHAT TO DO:

- Give children a few toy animals to explore.
- Encourage them to move and act out simple stories.
- Create scenes like “animals eating,” “sleeping,” or “playing.”
- Talk about what the animals are doing together.

## BENEFITS:

- Develops imagination and creativity
- Encourages early storytelling skills
- Builds language and vocabulary
- Supports social and emotional understanding
- Improves fine motor skills through toy play
- Enhances focus and attention



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with 2–3 animals only.
- Use familiar animals like pets first.
- Add simple story prompts (farm, jungle, zoo).
- Join in to model short sentences.
- Let children lead and create their own stories.

# VISUAL TRACKING & FOCUS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Small toy or object (high-contrast or brightly coloured)
- Simple mobile or hanging objects
- Quiet, comfortable space
- Soft mat or safe place for baby to lie down

## WHAT TO DO:

- Hold a toy about 20–30 cm from your baby's face.
- Slowly move it side to side and allow your baby to follow it with their eyes.
- Pause occasionally to let them focus.
- Place your baby under a simple mobile and let them watch the gentle movement.
- Talk softly and encourage attention.

## BENEFITS:

- Supports visual tracking and eye coordination
- Improves focus and attention span
- Strengthens early brain and visual development
- Encourages calm engagement
- Supports early concentration skills
- Builds awareness of movement



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with slow, small movements
- Use high-contrast objects for younger babies
- Keep sessions short and calm
- Follow your baby's cues and stop if they look away
- Gradually increase movement range as focus improves

# COMMUNICATION & SOCIAL PLAY

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Your face (the best “toy” for baby!)
- Soft mat or comfortable space
- Optional: baby-safe mirror
- Calm, distraction-free environment

## WHAT TO DO:

- Make simple facial expressions for your baby to watch and copy (smile, open mouth, stick out tongue).
- Play naming games like “Where is your nose?” while gently pointing.
- Make simple sounds (cooing or babbling) and pause for your baby to respond.
- Encourage back-and-forth interaction through eye contact, sounds, and smiles.

## BENEFITS:

- Supports early communication skills
- Builds social awareness and connection
- Encourages imitation and early speech development
- Strengthens bonding with the caregiver
- Develops listening and turn-taking skills
- Builds attention and focus on faces and voices



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Keep expressions slow and simple
- Repeat activities often for familiarity
- Use a mirror to help babies see themselves
- Follow your baby’s interests and reactions
- Keep interactions short, playful, and warm
- Pause often to allow baby “response time” (even if it’s just a smile!)

# FINE MOTOR & GRASPING

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Safe, easy-to-hold objects (soft toys, rings, blocks)
- Socks or mittens
- Ribbon pieces or fabric strips in a box (secure and supervised)
- Soft mat or safe play space

## WHAT TO DO:

- Offer your baby small, safe objects to pick up and hold.
- Encourage them to grasp and drop items naturally.
- Let them pull off socks or mittens during play.
- Provide a box with ribbons for them to pull out and explore.
- Stay close and interact with gentle encouragement.

## BENEFITS:

- Develops fine motor skills and hand strength
- Encourages grasp-and-release coordination
- Supports hand-eye coordination
- Promotes sensory exploration through touch
- Builds early independence and control of movement
- Strengthens curiosity and exploration



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with larger, easy-to-grip objects
- Offer one item at a time to avoid overwhelm
- Use soft, safe materials for pulling activities
- Always supervise closely, especially with ribbons
- Gradually introduce smaller or more varied objects as skills develop

# BODY AWARENESS & MOVEMENT

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Soft mat or blanket
- Comfortable, warm space
- Baby-safe oil or lotion (optional)
- A few simple toys for reaching

## WHAT TO DO:

- Gently massage your baby's arms, legs, and tummy using soft, slow strokes.
- Move your baby's legs in a gentle "bicycle" motion.
- Support your baby in a sitting position and offer a toy to explore.
- Talk, smile, and maintain eye contact during the activity.

## BENEFITS:

- Builds early body awareness
- Supports muscle development and coordination
- Helps digestion and reduces discomfort (bicycle legs)
- Encourages sensory development through touch
- Strengthens bonding and emotional connection
- Supports balance and early sitting skills



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Follow your baby's cues—stop if they seem uncomfortable
- Keep movements slow, gentle, and short
- Start with one activity at a time
- Use familiar songs or soothing voices to comfort
- Adjust support as your baby grows stronger and more stable

# SENSORY TOUCH & FEEL PLAY

## WHATS NEEDED:

Create a simple sensory play setup using safe, everyday household items with different textures.
Place a few items on a tray, mat, or shallow box and allow your baby to explore freely.
You can include materials such as: Bubble wrap, Tin foil, Egg cartons, Soft fabric (e.g. cloth, scarf, towel) Sponges, Silicone kitchen tools, crinkly paper or packaging

## WHAT TO DO:

- Sit with your baby and allow them to touch, squeeze, pat, scrunch, or mouth (if safe) the materials at their own pace. You can gently model actions like tapping or squeezing, but avoid directing—let them lead the exploration.
- Use simple language alongside play, such as:
- "Soft," "crinkly," "bumpy," "cold," "smooth."
- Keep the setup simple (3–5 items is plenty) and rotate materials to maintain interest.

## BENEFITS:

- Brain Development - Different textures stimulate neural connections and help the brain make sense of the world.
- Sensory Processing - Babies learn how to respond to different sensations like rough, smooth, soft, and hard.
- Fine Motor Skills - Grasping, squeezing, and exploring materials strengthens hand muscles and coordination.
- Focus & Attention - Simple sensory play encourages longer engagement and curiosity.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For Younger Babies (0–6 months)** Focus on high-contrast and simple textures, Hold materials for them to touch, Use slow, gentle movements, Prioritise safe mouthing items
- **For Older Babies (6–12 months)** Place items within reach for independent exploration. Add containers for putting in/out. Introduce more varied textures and resistance
- **For Sensory-Sensitive Babies** Start with softer, more familiar materials. Introduce new textures gradually. Follow your baby's cues—no pressure to touch
- **For Sensory-Seeking Babies** Include more varied and stronger textures (crinkly, bumpy, firm) Add actions like scrunching, banging, or pulling

# TUMMY TIME

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Soft, clean play mat or blanket
- Tummy time pillow or rolled towel for support
- Baby-safe mirror or high-contrast toys
- Rattles, textured toys, or books
- A safe, flat surface
- Supervision and encouragement from an adult

## WHAT TO DO:

- **Set Up** – Place the baby on a soft mat or blanket on the floor.
- **Support if Needed** – Use a small rolled towel or tummy time pillow under the chest for beginners.
- **Engage Baby** – Place toys or a mirror in front to encourage lifting their head.
- **Stay Close** – Supervise and talk or sing to the baby for comfort.
- **Start Small** – Begin with short sessions (1–2 minutes) and gradually increase as the baby builds strength.

## BENEFITS:

- Strengthens neck, shoulders, and core muscles
- Promotes motor development and coordination
- Prevents flat head syndrome
- Boosts sensory and visual exploration
- Prepares the baby for crawling and rolling



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use a soft mat or tummy time pillow for support
- Place toys or mirrors in front to encourage reaching
- Lie down face-to-face for bonding and motivation
- Try short, frequent sessions throughout the day
- Add textures or fabrics for sensory stimulation
- Use music or rattles to keep baby engaged

# MIRROR PLAY

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Baby-safe, unbreakable mirror (floor, wall-mounted, or handheld)
- A clean, soft mat or safe play surface
- Age-appropriate toys for interaction
- Optional: face stickers or simple props for added fun
- Supervision to ensure safe exploration

## WHAT TO DO:

- Place a baby-safe mirror at the baby's level.
- Use during tummy time or seated play.
- Let the baby explore their reflection.
- Make faces or play peekaboo together.
- Add soft toys for extra fun.

## BENEFITS:

- **Visual Awareness** – Helps babies explore reflections and focus on faces.
- **Self-Recognition** – Supports early identity development and social skills.
- **Cognitive Growth** – Encourages curiosity and cause-and-effect learning.
- **Motor Development** – Promotes reaching, touching, and coordination.
- **Language Skills** – Stimulates babbling and facial expression mimicry.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use handheld, floor, or wall mirrors safely.
- Add face stickers or drawings for extra fun.
- Place toys near the mirror to encourage reaching.
- Play peekaboo or make funny faces together.
- Pair with songs or rhymes to boost engagement.

# MAGNETIC/NON MAGNETIC

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Tray and magnet
- Pencil
- Rock
- Metal
- Bulldog clip
- Toy digger
- Wooden block
- Key
- Metal spoon
- Coins etc.

## WHAT TO DO:

- Place a mix of magnetic and non-magnetic items on the tray.
- Give your toddler a magnetic wand and encourage free exploration.
- They pick up one item at a time and test its magnetism using the wand.

## BENEFITS:

- Develops scientific thinking – children explore cause and effect through magnetism.
- Enhances fine motor skills – picking up and testing objects strengthens hand control.
- Builds hand-eye coordination – guiding the wand requires precision.
- Encourages observation and comparison – distinguishes between magnetic and non-magnetic objects.




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Younger toddlers:** Use larger, safe magnetic objects and a single wand; focus on exploration and discovery.
- **Older toddlers/preschoolers:** Introduce smaller objects, multiple wands, or a mix of shapes and sizes for a challenge.
- **Learning twist:** Sort items into magnetic vs. non-magnetic groups and count or compare them.

# FOLDING CLOTHES

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Small cloths, socks, napkins, or simple clothing items
- Basket or tray
- Optional folding guides or marked lines

## WHAT TO DO:

- Show how to fold each item slowly, step by step.
- Invite children to match edges, smooth fabric, and fold neatly.
- Place folded items in a basket or stack them.

## BENEFITS:

- Builds fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination
- Strengthens concentration and focus
- Develops sequencing and memory skills
- Encourages independence and responsibility
- Supports order and routine
- Promotes problem-solving skills
- Develops bilateral coordination (using both hands together)



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with simple squares like washcloths.
- Use socks for matching and folding.
- Progress to shirts or larger clothing.
- Add sorting by colour, size, or family member for extra challenge.

# LAND AND SEA SORTING

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Land and Sea labels/cards
- Small items or picture cards (animals, objects, etc.)
- Two bowls/trays/areas for sorting
- Optional: tweezers or scoopers for added fine motor work

## WHAT TO DO:

- Place two labels: Land and Sea.
- Lay out all sorting items in a pile.
- Explain: “Land is for lions, Sea is for fish.”
- Show how to sort a couple of items.
- Let your child sort the rest.
- Optional: Add a “Both” category for tricky ones.
- Check the groups together and talk about any mistakes.

## BENEFITS:

- Enhances categorization skills – children learn to group items by type or theme.
- Builds vocabulary – introduces land and sea animals, objects, and environments.
- Supports early math skills – counting and comparing groups.
- Strengthens fine motor skills – picking up and placing items develops hand control.




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Younger toddlers:** Use a few large, simple objects for sorting; focus on basic recognition.
- **Older toddlers/preschoolers:** Add more items, subtle differences, or smaller objects for challenge.
- **Learning twist:** Introduce sorting by additional attributes like color, size, or habitat.

# SORT SMALL TO BIG

## WHATS NEEDED:

- You can use anything but here is an example of round objects:
- Golf Ball
- Tennis Ball
- Football
- Basketball
- Fruit (peach, kiwi, apple, orange, melon etc)

## WHAT TO DO:

- Place balls in a basket or tray.
- Invite your child to arrange them from smallest to largest.
- Use other objects too—like garden sticks, wooden spoons, or household items.
- Great for teaching size order, comparison, and problem-solving.

## BENEFITS:

- Introduces early math concepts (size, comparison).
- Helps children understand and use descriptive language (big/small).
- Builds observation and classification skills.
- Strengthens fine motor skills when using tongs.
- Encourages problem-solving through hands-on exploration.
- Supports language development with size-related vocabulary.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Younger toddlers:** Use 3–4 large, easily distinguishable objects; focus on basic size recognition.
- **Older toddlers/preschoolers:** Add more items with subtle size differences for a challenge.
- **Fine motor twist:** Use tongs, tweezers, or scoops to pick up and place objects.
- **Learning extension:** Encourage counting, sequencing, or comparing groups (“Which is bigger/smaller?”).

# FILL THE CONTAINER

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Illustrated containers (e.g., jar, cup, bucket, bottle)
- Simple fill items (drawn or printed):
  - marbles
  - cubes or blocks
  - coloured lids
- Optional: stickers, crayons, or pencils for responses
- Visual cues like “empty,” “half full,” “full” icons (for support)

## WHAT TO DO:

**Activity 1: Which Holds More?**

- Show 2–3 containers.
- Ask: “Which container will hold more?”
- Child circles the correct answer.

**Activity 2: Fill Level Drawing**

- Show containers in outline form.
- Ask children to draw or shade: empty, half full, full

**Extension Question:**
What would you put inside each container?”

## BENEFITS:

- Builds early math reasoning (capacity and comparison)
- Develops visual estimation skills
- Strengthens critical thinking (“Which holds more?”)
- Introduces early scientific concepts of volume
- Encourages decision-making and reasoning skills
- Supports fine motor skills through circling or drawing
- Prepares children for later measurement concepts




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Younger children:** Use simple big vs small containers
- **Older children:** Add closer comparisons and use “more” and “less capacity.”
- **Advanced:** Include trick shapes where size can be misleading
- **Hands-on:** Use real containers for filling and exploring
- **Themed:** Try fun ideas like beach, kitchen, or space settings

# HEAVY OR LIGHT FILL

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Containers (cups, bottles, jars, bowls, buckets)
- Safe filling materials (water, rice, beans, sand, or blocks)
- Tray or mat to manage spills
- Optional: scoop or spoon for filling
- Optional: cloth for quick clean-up

## WHAT TO DO:

- Fill real containers with different amounts of material
- Place them side by side for clear comparison
- Ask: *"Which one looks heavier/full?"*
- Let children point, lift (if safe), or discuss their choice
- Compare results and talk about why fuller containers feel heavier

## BENEFITS:

- Builds understanding of capacity (full, half, empty)
- Introduces the early concept of weight (heavy vs light)
- Strengthens observation and comparison skills
- Encourages hands-on learning and exploration
- Develops reasoning and prediction skills
- Supports real-world understanding of volume and mass




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Younger children:** Use obvious differences (very empty vs very full containers)
- **Older children:** Use similar fill levels to increase thinking challenge
- **Advanced:** Ask children to predict before touching or lifting
- **Hands-on extension:** Let children fill and compare containers themselves

# SPILL OR NO SPILL?

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Containers (cups, bottles, bowls, jars)
- Water or safe filling materials (beans, rice, blocks)
- A measuring scoop or spoon (optional)
- Tray or mat to manage spills

## WHAT TO DO:

- Fill real containers to different levels (low, half, nearly full)
- Show them to the children one by one
- Ask: *"Which container might spill if we add more?"*
- Let children choose and explain their thinking
- Carefully test by adding a little more to check the result
- Talk about what happened and why

## BENEFITS:

- Builds understanding of full, nearly full, and overflow
- Strengthens cause-and-effect thinking
- Encourages prediction and reasoning skills
- Develops observation and attention to detail
- Introduces early awareness of safe limits and control
- Makes learning hands-on and memorable




## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Younger children:** Use obvious differences in fill levels (very empty vs very full)
- **Older children:** Use closer fill levels to increase challenge
- **Advanced:** Ask children to predict how much more will cause a spill
- **Hands-on extension:** Let children fill and test containers themselves

# TEXTURE RUBBING ART

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Paper (thicker paper works best)
- Crayons or pencils
- Textured objects: leaves, coins, textured fabric, tree bark, sandpaper, or bottle caps
- Optional: coloured pencils, pastels, or markers for layering effects

## WHAT TO DO:

- Place the paper over the textured object.
- Hold the paper steady and rub the side of a crayon or pencil over the surface to reveal the texture.
- Experiment with different angles, pressures, and colours to create varied effects.
- Encourage layering multiple textures on one piece of paper.
- Discuss what textures were easiest or hardest to see, and observe differences between objects.

## BENEFITS:

- **Sensory Exploration:** Feel and discover different textures under the paper.
- **Observation Skills:** Encourages careful looking and noticing fine details in objects like leaves, coins, bark, or fabric.
- **Creativity & Expression:** Experiment with colour, layering, and patterns to create unique artwork.
- **Early Science Skills:** Introduces concepts of texture, pattern, and material properties in a hands-on way.
- Fine Motor Skills with rubbing



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use different surfaces: leaves, coins, fabric, wood, or textured objects
- Experiment with crayons, pencils, or pastels for varied effects
- Try large sheets for collaborative projects or small pieces for individual work
- Explore patterns, layering, and color blending
- Encourage kids to create designs, shapes, or abstract art using textures

# NATURE SORTING STATION

## WHATS NEEDED:

A collection of natural items such as:

- Stones or pebbles
- Leaves of various shapes and colours
- Flowers or petals
- Sticks or twigs
- Pinecones, acorns, or seeds
- Tray for sorting

## WHAT TO DO:

- Lay out all the materials on the tray or table.
- Invite children to explore and sort the items however they choose—by size, type, colour, or texture.
- Encourage them to compare, group, and count their collections.
- Ask open-ended questions such as: “Which leaves are the biggest?” “Can you find two items that feel the same?” “How many stones are red?”

## BENEFITS:

- **Math & Sorting** – Sort by type, size, colour, or texture.
- **Sensory Awareness** – Explore touch, smell, and sight.
- **Vocabulary** – Learn names of items, colours, and textures.
- **Fine Motor Skills** – Handling small items strengthens hands.
- **Observation & Inquiry** – Notice patterns, differences, and similarities.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Magnifying Glass Exploration** – Provide magnifiers to examine textures, veins in leaves, or patterns in stones.
- **Pattern-Making** – Invite children to create repeating patterns or designs using their sorted items.
- **Seasonal Themes** – Collect materials according to the season: autumn leaves, spring flowers, winter pinecones.

# HOMEMADE PLAY SILKS

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Lightweight silk or cotton fabric squares
- Natural dyes (turmeric, beetroot, red cabbage, tea, onion skins, etc.)
- Large pot for boiling
- Water and vinegar (to help set the dye)
- Rubber gloves (optional)
- Drying rack or clothesline

## WHAT TO DO:

- **Prepare the Fabric** – Cut fabric into squares (about scarf size). Wash first to remove coatings.
- **Make the Dye** – Boil natural dye ingredients in water, then strain.
- **Soak & Dye** – Place fabric in the dye bath, simmer until the color takes.
- **Set the Color** – Add a splash of vinegar or salt, depending on the dye, to help it set.
- **Rinse & Dry** – Rinse gently and hang on a line to dry.
- **Play Away** – Children use the silks for dress-up, forts, dancing, or storytelling.

## BENEFITS:

- **Creativity & Imagination:** Endless open-ended play—capes, tents, rivers, costumes.
- **Connection to Nature:** Natural dyes teach children about plants and earth colors.
- **Fine & Gross Motor Skills:** Draping, knotting, and movement with silks build coordination.
- **Calm & Comfort:** Silks are soft, flowing, and soothing to handle.
- **Versatility:** One toy becomes many—sustainable, timeless play.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Younger Kids:** Use larger, single-color silks for easy play.
- **Older Kids:** Experiment with tie-dye, patterns, or layered colors.
- **Group Play:** Create forts, puppet shows, or shared imaginative worlds.
- **Accessibility:** Pre-dye silks for children to use without the process.
- **Seasonal Twist:** Use colors inspired by the seasons (spring pastels, autumn golds).

# PRESSED FLOWER ART

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Fresh flowers and leaves
- Heavy books or a flower press
- Paper (plain or in a notebook/journal)
- Glue or clear tape (optional, for mounting)
- Scissors
- Optional: cardstock for cards

## WHAT TO DO:

- Gather small flowers and leaves during a walk.
- Place between paper and press in a heavy book or flower press for 1–2 weeks.
- Check & Handle Carefully – Once dried and flat, carefully remove pressed flowers.
- Arrange on paper, cards, or journals. Use glue or tape if needed.
- Children can give as cards, decorate journals, or make seasonal displays.

## BENEFITS:

- **Connection to Nature:** Teaches observation, patience, and respect for natural materials.
- **Creativity & Imagination:** Inspires design, storytelling, and artistic expression.
- **Fine Motor Skills:** Handling delicate flowers and arranging compositions strengthens hand coordination.
- **Mindfulness & Calm:** Slow, careful work encourages focus and reflection.
- Encourages noticing seasonal changes and patterns in nature.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Younger Kids:** Use larger, sturdier flowers and simple arrangements.
- **Older Kids:** Experiment with patterns, journaling, or layered designs.
- **Group Play:** Make collaborative nature journals or shared card collections.
- **Accessibility:** Pre-press flowers or use larger leaves for easier handling.
- **Seasonal Twist:** Collect seasonal flowers or leaves to reflect current nature themes.

# CHALK ON PAVEMENT

## SET UP:

- Sidewalk or driveway space
- Chalk in various colors
- Optional: stencils, rulers, or templates for guided drawing

Pick a safe outdoor space, give each child chalk, and encourage them to draw marks, shapes, letters, or patterns, experimenting with size, color, and design as they move around.

## EXTENSION IDEAS

- Encourage tracing letters, numbers, or shapes for literacy and numeracy practice
- Create large collaborative murals with multiple children

## LANGUAGE

- “Can you draw a big circle or a small one?”
- “What patterns can you make with these colors?”

## BENEFITS:

- Strengthens fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination
- Supports early mark-making and pre-writing skills
- Encourages creativity, imagination, and self-expression
- Promotes spatial awareness and planning
- Provides sensory and outdoor learning opportunities



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For Younger Toddlers:** Focus on big marks, simple lines, and shapes & allow hand-over-hand guidance for drawing
- **For Preschoolers:** Encourage patterns, letters, numbers, or simple pictures & incorporate storytelling and imaginative play
- **For Children with Sensory Sensitivities:** Use thicker chalk for easier grip & allow breaks or smaller drawing areas for comfort

# TAPING LINES

## SET UP:

- Masking tape
- Paper or a flat surface
- Optional: scissors (for adult use)
- Optional: markers to decorate around the tape

Provide children with tape on a flat surface and show them how to peel and stick it to create lines, shapes, or patterns, encouraging them to explore angles, overlaps, and colors.

## EXTENSION IDEAS

- Peel and place tape to form letters, numbers, or simple pictures.
- Combine with coloring or painting for mixed-media artwork.

## LANGUAGE

- “Can you make a straight line or a zigzag?”
- “What shapes can you make by connecting your tape?”

## BENEFITS:

- Strengthens fine motor skills and hand strength
- Builds hand-eye coordination
- Supports early mark-making and pre-writing skills
- Encourages creativity, imagination, and problem-solving
- Promotes spatial awareness and planning
- Provides a low-mess, focused activity for concentration



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For Younger Toddlers:** Use shorter strips and focus on simple lines or shapes & adults can guide hand-over-hand for placement.
- **For Preschoolers**: Encourage creating patterns, letters, numbers, or more complex designs & challenge them to think about symmetry or repeating sequences.
- **For Children with Sensory Sensitivities**: Use wider tape for easier grip & allow them to use a tool (like a popsicle stick) to lift and place tape.

# VEHICLE WASHING STATION

## SET UP:

- Shallow basin, bucket, or storage box
- Water table or sink
- Outdoor tub or tray
- Place a towel or mat underneath to allow relaxed, mess-friendly play.

## EXTENSION IDEAS

**Wash → Rinse → Dry Sequence:** Introduce a simple order of steps. Lay out towels  Line up clean vehicles afterwards: This supports early sequencing and independence.

**Dirty to Clean Play:** Wash vehicles covered in mud, sand, paint, or foam. Talk about "dirty" and "clean" without pressure. Celebrate the process, not the result

**Sorting & Organisation:** Clean vs dirty vehicles. Big vs small. Washed vs not yet washed. Line-up play is calming and meaningful

## BENEFITS:

- Sensory regulation · Fine motor strength · Hand–eye coordination · Early independence · Language development · Emotional calming
- A vehicle washing station combines water, repetition, and purposeful action, making it especially supportive for toddlers who enjoy routine, sequencing, or calming sensory input. It also mirrors real-life experiences, which builds understanding and confidence.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For a Child Who Seeks C**alm & Focus: Use warm (not hot) water, offer slow, repetitive actions (wipe, squeeze, rinse), sit quietly nearby, and narrate gently. Allow long periods of repetition. This can be a beautiful regulation activity after high-energy play.
- **For a Child Who Loves Big Movements:** Carry vehicles to and from the station. Scoop and pour water repeatedly. Use larger containers or heavier vehicles. Combine with pushing or pulling a basket of vehicles
- **For a Child Who Is Hesitant With Water:** Start with a dry "pretend wash." Offer tools to avoid direct hand contact. Let them observe first. Begin with just dipping wheels or small splashes. Respecting boundaries builds trust and confidence.

# VEHICLE TRACK PAINTING

## SET UP:

- Large paper on the floor or table
- Cardboard boxes opened flat
- Paper taped to the wall (standing play)
- Outdoor surfaces (washable paint only)
- Secure paper with tape to prevent slipping and frustration.

## EXTENSION IDEAS

**Colour Exploration:**
Roll through one colour, then another. Watch colours mix naturally. Name colours casually (“blue lines”, “yellow wheels”)

**Direction & Pathways:**
Create roads with tape under paper. Roll up, down, across. Add ramps leading onto the paper

**Story-Based Painting:**
“The truck is driving through mud.” “The car is racing home.” Narrate as the vehicle moves rather than asking questions

## BENEFITS:

- Builds fine motor skills through gripping, pressing, and guiding vehicles
- Encourages creativity and self-expression through colour and pattern making
- Supports early cognitive development through cause-and-effect exploration
- Improves hand-eye coordination as children guide vehicles across paper
- Enhances sensory exploration through paint texture and movement



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For a Child Who Loves Big Movement:** Place paper on the floor. Encourage long pushes across the page. Use large vehicles. Tape paper to the wall for vertical movement. This supports shoulder strength and body awareness.
- **For a Child Who Prefers Control & Precision:** Offer smaller vehicles. Use a smaller painting space. Move slowly together. Watch the tracks appear in detail. Some children enjoy watching the marks more than making them.
- **For a Child Who Is Hesitant About Paint:** Start with dry rolling (no paint) Let them observe first. Use gloves or tools initially. Begin with one finger touch if ready. Exposure without pressure still counts as participation.

# RAMPS & INCLINES

## SET UP:

Ramps don't need special equipment. Everyday items work perfectly:

- Cardboard pieces
- Books or magazines
- Cushions or sofa arms
- Wooden planks
- Outdoor slopes or playground slides
- Secure ramps against a wall or heavy object if needed for safety.

## LANGUAGE

- "It went fast."
- "It stopped."
- "Up the ramp... down."
- "Again!"

## VARIATIONS

- A different vehicle
- A new height
- A new surface
- Indoors vs outdoors
- Small changes keep the learning alive without extra effort.

## BENEFITS:

- Gross motor development · Problem-solving · Cause & effect · Early STEM thinking · Visual tracking · Emotional regulation
- Ramps and inclines invite toddlers to explore movement, speed, and control. This type of play is simple on the surface but incredibly rich, helping children understand how their actions create outcomes.



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For a Child Who Loves Speed & Energy:** Make ramps steeper, Use phrases like "Ready... steady... GO!", Race two vehicles side by side, Add a crash zone with pillows or soft blocks. This type of play offers safe excitement and helps children regulate big energy.
- **For a Child Who Is Cautious or Observational:** Start with a gentle slope, Roll vehicles slowly together, Sit at the bottom and receive the vehicle, Let them send the vehicle while you retrieve it. Watching movement is still active learning and builds confidence over time.
- **For a Child Who Needs Heavy Work:** Use heavier vehicles or objects, Push vehicles up the ramp, Pull vehicles back with a rope or scarf Add resistance (fabric or textured mat on the ramp) Heavy work supports body awareness and calm focus.

# FRIENDSHIP ART PLAY

## WHATS NEEDED:

- Large paper or shared drawing sheet
- Crayons, markers, or paint
- Stickers or stampers
- Open table or floor space

## WHAT TO DO:

- Give children one shared paper to draw on.
- Encourage them to scribble, draw, or add stickers together.
- Talk about what each child is adding.
- Celebrate the shared finished artwork.

## BENEFITS:

- Encourages sharing and cooperation
- Builds early social interaction skills
- Supports communication and turn-taking
- Develops creativity and self-expression
- Improves fine motor skills
- Builds awareness of working with others



## HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with large paper for more space.
- Use stickers for easier participation.
- Let children draw at the same time freely.
- Add themes like “our garden” or “our happy picture.”
- Work alongside children to model sharing and language.

# 101 WAYS TO PLAY COLLECTION

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