



Supplies

- “Guide for Families” handout
- Clear plastic standup display (optional)
- A medium-sized tray or tub
- Flour, rice or cornmeal (approximately 1 pound)
- A variety of measuring tools (1 cup, ½ cup, teaspoon, tablespoon and others), toys (dinosaurs, cars, balls, blocks and others) and household objects (drinking straw, spoon, cup, craft stick and others)
- Display table

Activity Preparation

- ▶ Purchase or locate items on supply list.
- ▶ Print one copy of the “Guide for Families” handout. Laminate or place in a clear plastic standup display to allow participants to see it more readily.
- ▶ Place flour, rice or cornmeal in the tray or tub.
- ▶ Remove all stickers and tags from the measuring tools and toys.
- ▶ Place measuring tools and toys on table.





HEADS IN, HEARTS IN



Sensory Play Guide for Families

Learning Objectives

What you need to know:

Sensory play, or play that involves the senses, is important for young children. When children are free to explore materials and play using touch, sight, smell, taste, movement and balance, they are learning about the world around them in a fun way. Young children are concrete learners. They need to touch and manipulate things in order to understand them. Sensory play allows them to do this while also strengthening pathways in the brain that help with learning and healthy development. When children use their senses, they develop creativity, social skills, problem-solving skills, hand-eye coordination, science-related skills and more. Anything that is messy could be considered sensory play.

What you will do and learn:

The child will develop skills while freely exploring the sensory materials provided.

Instructions

1. Encourage the child to manipulate and explore the sensory material (flour or corn meal). They can explore the material with their hands by running it through their fingers, cupping it in their hands, and squeezing it in between the thumb and forefinger.
2. Begin adding measuring tools, toys and objects to the tray or tub.
3. Allow the child to play freely with the materials. You can also encourage him or her to draw shapes, letters and numbers in the flour or cornmeal.
4. They can pour the flour, rice or cornmeal into the measuring tools, toys or household objects to play. You can help children learn and use new vocabulary words as they play. You can talk about filling and emptying containers, “You are pouring/dumping/emptying,” “I see that one scoop of cornmeal filled up the small container. How many scoops do you think it will take to fill up a large container?” “When you pour the rice, it sounds *louder* than the cornmeal.” Give the child the opportunity to explore with their senses and get messy.