



Sensory play is any activity that stimulates the senses and it is crucial for the cognitive, emotional, and physical development of children (and adults!) of all ages. Sensory activities are open-ended and encourage exploration of materials and processes, rather than the end product.

Recognizing and interpreting sensory information provides many benefits, including:

- Builds nerve connections in a child's brain that help them engage in more complex and sophisticated learning tasks.
- Supports language development as the child learns to use adjectives to describe items and experiences (hot, cold, wet, sticky, etc.).
- Encourages the child to use scientific processes as they play, create, investigate and explore using their senses.

Engaging children with extra needs in sensory activities is especially beneficial. Encouraging a child to engage in sensory play may help with social and communication abilities, while also helping them self-regulate overwhelming experiences. Along with the cognitive and physical benefits, sensory play is an effective coping strategy to help children (and adults) reduce levels of stress and anxiety.

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*Playing with blocks is a traditional activity that helps children develop both physically and cognitively. Open-ended building can spark creativity, imagination, and an opportunity to practice problem-solving and math skills. Try taking block play to the next level by adding shaving cream for a fun sensory experience that will stimulate the senses and expose children to a new texture.*



### Engineering with Shaving Cream and Foam Blocks

1. Gather your materials. In a tray or bin layout, a variety of foam blocks and put a generous amount of foamy shaving cream in a corner.
2. Ask open-ended questions. What do you think the shaving cream feels like? How will the shaving cream help in building using the foam blocks? What are you going to build?
3. Dip the foam blocks into the shaving cream and stick them together. Try stacking them, but also building across to create arches and bridges.
4. The shaving cream acts as a glue that allows the foam blocks to bind together to create sturdier structures.
5. Try binding other materials together with shaving cream, such as cork!

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