



Sensory play is any activity that stimulates the senses. 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.

New York Hall of Science

47-01 111th Street
 Queens, NY 11368-2950
 718 699 0005
 Fax: 718 699 1341
www.nysci.org



Sensory Painting

Colors are everywhere in our environment! Use materials in your kitchen such as fruits, vegetables and spices to make easy and inexpensive watercolor paints that are free of toxins and chemicals.

Mash, grind and crush natural materials to extract colorful dyes and pigments, and use them to paint on paper, cardboard and even textiles! Involve children in this creative and sensory science experiment by encouraging them to test different materials with various amounts of water to make stronger or lighter colors.



1. Gather your materials. You'll need several cups of lukewarm water, some stirring instruments, a paintbrush and a surface to paint on.
2. Experiment with what you can add to the water to create a range of colors to paint with. For example, try dissolving paprika, turmeric, hibiscus, or coffee grounds and tea to create earthy colors. For brighter colors, try mashing fresh berries such as strawberries or blueberries, and strain the colored liquid into a cup to remove any pulp.
3. Then paint on your paper, cardboard or textiles to create your masterpiece!

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