

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Treasure baskets for babies

Learning aims

Through sensory exploration babies will be beginning to discover:

- Cause and effect
- Weight
- Balance
- Texture
- Sound
- Grasping and releasing
- Problem solving.



Resources

- Large, sturdy, deep basket
- Wide range of resources and materials (approximately 50) which should be carefully selected for sensory appeal, e.g. Metal items such as a teaspoon, metal ring, length of chain, tin, stacking bowls, whisk, tea strainer, tongs
- Wooden items such as short-handled spoons, wooden rings, scoop, bowl and wooden figures such as elephants or cats
- Natural materials such as smooth pebbles, shells, pine cones, dried fruit and seed pods, loofah, large corks
- Fabrics, including gauze and knitted or crocheted items
- Objects that move in different ways, have different weights, textures and properties including lengths of beads, ribbons, cardboard boxes, small velvet jewel boxes, lids from perfume bottles, bangles
- Avoid plastic toys (while as adults we may appreciate that a plastic train is different from a plastic car, for a baby the textures, weight and properties are not different enough to be interesting or stimulating).

Activity outline

1. Collect suitable objects and materials, checking them for small parts or anything that might present a hazard. Remember to make sure that they can be washed as babies will use their mouths to explore the objects

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2. Fill the basket so it is full of enticing treasures
3. Clear away other 'usual' toys and place the basket in a comfy area so the focus is on the treasure basket
4. There are no right or wrong ways of playing with the resources: if the babies are exploring, problem solving, creating and discovering then the objects are doing their job. It will also mean that the resources are age and developmentally appropriate
5. Every child's response to the items in the treasure basket will be unique
6. Adult supervision is needed but this time is best uninterrupted, with adults sitting and watching the babies and learning about what they do and what engages them. Enjoy watching the children show you what they are interested in. You should see children deeply engaged, concentrating, focussing and demonstrating curiosity and perhaps determination (such as if they try to fit one object inside another). Practitioners will need to gauge how long each session will last by the responses of the babies and be aware of signs indicating that they have had enough. The length of time is likely to vary from session to session
7. Adults still need to interact with the babies. Make eye contact, smile and take objects if they are offered, but don't feel pressured into commenting, providing vocabulary or asking questions
8. Provide regular treasure basket sessions and notice if there are any items which the babies don't choose. Consider why this may be and replace them with alternative items. Over time, you may notice children having favourite resources they return to each time and you may notice babies building on experiences in previous sessions, demonstrating progress in their thinking.

Extension ideas

- If babies demonstrate schemas through their treasure basket play, ensure that there are relevant resources available in the continuous provision for the schema to be explored further
- Develop themed baskets to be used in the environment which reflect common interests shown during the treasure basket sessions, e.g. if a number of children are enjoying the brushes then develop a brush basket with a baby's hair brush, toothbrush, nail brush, shaving brush, scrubbing brush, paint brush, make-up brush, feather duster and so on. This time, as the babies explore the items, the adults can name the objects, demonstrate how they can be used for different purposes, introduce a range of vocabulary such as tickly, rough, soft, hard and compare sizes and weights.

Support for this activity

- [Course: Brilliant babies](#)
- [Course: Quality interactions with babies](#)
- [Course: Power of play with babies](#)
- [Course: Baby room leader](#)
- [Publication: Brilliant babies](#)