

Healthy Body, Happy Me 2023

Water Play



Water Play

Theorist Jean Piaget proposed that children primarily learn about their environment and gain new knowledge through sensory exploration. He suggested that this type of play was key to a child's brain development.

Water is one of the basic raw materials you can provide indoors and outdoors to engage children in sensory play and, as water is naturally fascinating, it seems to draw children to explore its properties. From the feeling of sprayed water droplets on their skin and splashing in large puddles to creating a funnel system to explore flow and motion, water is open-ended and therefore developmentally appropriate for all children. It supports cognitive growth, fine and gross motor skills, problem solving skills, social interaction and language development.

Water facilitates solitary, parallel, associative, and cooperative play (Parten, 1929) and when children are engaged in water play they naturally begin to learn and use language. When playing alone, more often than not, children will be narrating to themselves, working out concepts and finding ways to understand and describe what is happening. As children play with water alongside adults and each other, they will be listening to the rich language others use, increasing their range of vocabulary and learning how to converse. Practitioners can support children's language development through the wide range of resources that accompany water play and model fantastic verbs and adjectives to describe how water moves, feels, looks and sounds.

Water play can also be a calming and therapeutic activity for children and practitioners as they enjoy the soothing touch of water and the sensory stimulation that it offers. Gentle, repetitive activities such as scooping, sieving or running water through hands can really help to relax and relieve tension.

As well as being a basic raw material, water is also a precious resource. Provide opportunities for children to develop an awareness of this by talking to them and modelling how to conserve water. For example, by only using a certain amount of water each day for outdoor play or re-using water for different purposes such as putting ice on the grass or plants after use.

Today's Healthy Body, Happy Me activities will provide you with lots of ideas to promote children's language development as they have a splashtastic time.

NOTE: Settings may wish to ask parents to send in extra spare clothes if they will be engaging in lots of water play.

**All water activities must be risk assessed
and be supervised by adults.**



Naturally fascinating



Soothing feeling of water

Activity 1 River run

Having the opportunity to experiment with water on a larger scale outdoors is not only exciting and inclusive for all children but also beneficial for their learning and development.

River run will support children's problem solving, critical thinking and social skills as well as their communication and language development as they construct a unique water channel with open-ended resources to explore the movement of water as it flows.

River run

Activity outline

- Choose a space outdoors on an incline, or create a ramp
- Roll out a length of tinfoil (doubled for extra durability)
- Scrunch the foil at the sides and one end to create a gutter shape
- Add rocks, sand and pebbles to create a river bed
- Place the bottom end into a container, collecting water to re-use
- Use a watering can to pour water down the river. Talk about what happens, asking questions such as, "Why do you think the water flows down?" and "How can you make the water flow faster/slower?"
- Children can sail their boats, problem solving how they can overcome any obstacles
- Observe children's play and extend their language with new vocabulary.

Give children instructions on how to make boats:

- Secure a ball of playdough/blu tack at one end of the straw
- Stick it into a plastic bottle top as a mast
- Fix some paper to the straw as a sail.

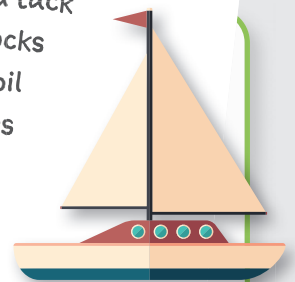
Health and Safety

Plastic can be slippery when wet and children can drown even in the smallest amounts of water; ensure constant adult supervision.



Resources

- Suitable outdoor clothing for water play
- Large empty cardboard boxes
- Large shallow plastic tray
- Playdough or blu tack
- Small pebbles, rocks
- Heavy duty tin foil
- Plastic bottle tops
- Paper straws
- Craft paper
- Water
- Sand



Learning opportunities include:

- Explore cause and effect relationships e.g. the force of gravity pulling water downward
- Develop listening and attention skills
- Problem solving skills, persistence
- Learn new vocabulary
- Develop social skills.

Top tip

Value questions, talk, and the many possible responses. Don't feel you have to give an answer straight away – let children explore.

Activity 1 Continued...



Ready, set, go!

Extension ideas

Have boat races. Encourage children to make predictions about whose boat will come first, second and third and record the results.

Provide small world animals such as fish, frogs and otters enabling children to play and act out experiences, increasing their range of vocabulary.

Introduce the concept of floating and sinking. Provide a range of items (pine cones, twigs, leaves, corks, sponge and stones) and encourage children to predict what will float or sink, recording their predictions and then testing them out.



Ideas for different ages

During tummy time provide a very shallow baking tray with a very small amount of water for babies to touch and discover the cause and effect of splashing. Talk to babies about what they are doing as they explore water, "You are splashing the water with your hand. Splish, splash, splosh."

Provide small bowls of water for babies and toddlers to sit next to and explore with a range of items such as sponges, whisks, plastic floating balls and scoops.



Key vocabulary might include:

- River
- Flowing
- Fast
- Slow
- Float
- Fill
- Sink
- Pour
- Uphill
- Downhill
- Droplet
- Splash.



Activity 2 Make a rainbow

Make a rainbow is a fun experiment which brings an additional scientific focus to water play. Children will create a rainbow by using water to move colours through paper, known as capillary action, showing children an exciting example of how water can move upwards, against gravity, with no tipping action.

Make a rainbow

Activity outline

- Introduce 'gravity' to children, explaining it as a force which effects objects without touching them. Demonstrate by jumping, dropping a ball, running a tap, etc
- Explain they are going to experiment with getting water to travel upwards against gravity. Engage children in discussing how they think this could be done
- Fold a piece of kitchen paper in half widthways. Cut to 7.5"/19cm
- At each end draw rectangular blocks of colour about 1"/2.5cm long with washable markers in the order of the rainbow
- Fill two glasses/jars with water $\frac{3}{4}$ full
- Place the paper with one end in each of the glasses/jars, but not too deep
- Ask the children to predict what will happen and describe what is happening
- The colours will slowly move along the paper, meeting in the middle to create a rainbow (approx. 10-15 minutes)
- Explain the water is 'sucked up' using capillary action.

Top tip

Ask open ended questions to prompt children to talk about what they can see such as "I wonder why ...?", "How ...?"



Resources

- Water
- Strong, absorbent kitchen roll
- Washable markers in rainbow colours
- Small glasses or jars e.g. jam jars.

Learning opportunities include:

- Develop an understanding of scientific language and concepts
- Check how well their activities are going
- Make predictions and test their ideas
- Develop problem solving skills
- Ignite curiosity.

Key vocabulary might include:

- Names of colours (red, green, blue)
- Upwards
- Rainbow
- Spread
- Gravity
- Soak.



Create your own rainbow

Activity 2 Continued...

Ideas for different ages

Provide edible finger paints for babies and toddlers to explore.

Make edible paints by mixing two cups cornflour with five cups cold water in a pan. Heat gently while stirring continuously. Once the mixture has thickened, split into different bowls and add a few drops of food colouring. Mix well and add cold water if the mixture is too thick.

Cover the floor with a large plastic sheet or present the paints in a tuff tray. Encourage babies and toddlers to explore the paints using their whole bodies.



Mix your own colours

Extension ideas

Provide trays, kitchen roll, washable markers, pipettes and a bowl of water so children can explore capillary action in free play.

Provide three plastic containers of water mixed with food colouring (red, blue, and yellow) and some empty plastic containers and pipettes. Encourage children to colour mix and discover what colours they can make, recording their discoveries as they go.

Activity 3 Sensory citrus water play

Citrus water play provides a fun, sensory experience for children of all ages and abilities. Bringing together children of different ages and abilities can help to develop social and communication skills as they benefit from watching and listening to one another.

Sensory citrus water play

Activity outline

- Slice and chop fruits showing children the range of patterns and textures inside
- Fill a large tray with water and add the chopped fruit, squeezing in some juices
- Encourage the children to explore the citrus water. Provide commentary and engage children in conversations, encouraging descriptive language. Focus children on what their senses are telling them:
 - Citrus scents, colour of the fruit
 - Texture of the fruit pulp compared to the skin
 - Patterns and shapes they can see in different fruits
 - Taste of the fruit (if they mouth or lick citrus juice from their fingers)
- Add containers and utensils. The longer the water is played with, the stronger the scent will become
- Add drops of food colouring to the water and encourage children to swish the water about. The fruit will absorb the colouring. Support children to notice the changes and describe what is happening.



Resources

- Large container or tray e.g. an under bed storage tray
- Citrus fruits e.g. lemons, limes, oranges and grapefruit
- Utensils e.g. scoops and spoons of different sizes
- Containers of different shapes and sizes
- Knife to chop fruit (adults only)
- Food colouring
- Water

Learning opportunities include:

- Use all of the senses
- Develop hand-eye coordination
- Develop fine and gross motor skills
- Develop communication and language skills.

Top tip

Give children ten seconds to process and respond to an instruction, request or general talk. Waiting is crucial for giving children time to think and respond.



Exploration through senses

Health and Safety

Take into consideration any allergies children may have. Ice can pose a choking risk if put into the mouth, ensure constant adult supervision.

Activity 3 Continued...

Extension ideas

Afterwards, dry out the fruit and use it for another activity such as fruit printing.

Add different scents to water play, for example peppermint leaves or lavender essential oil.

Key vocabulary might include:

- Names of colours (yellow, green, orange, pink)
- Names of fruits (lemon, lime, orange, grapefruit)
- Citrus
- Juicy
- Tangy
- Full
- Empty
- Scoop.



Ideas for other ages

This activity is suitable for all ages and abilities with adult supervision.

To make scented ice you will need:

- A variety of flavoured tea bags
- Ice cube trays or muffin tins
- Mugs to brew tea in
- Food colouring

What to do:

- Put a flavoured tea bag into a mug and add boiling water (adult only)
- Let the water cool with the tea bag still in to get the strongest possible scent
- Add a drop of food colouring
- Pour into ice cube trays or muffin tins and freeze
- Children can explore the scented ice, making marks on paper as the ice melts and guessing the scent.



Activity 4 Tuff tray tea party

This tuff tray tea party activity combines water and role play, two of children's favourite things. Role play enables children to be creative, imaginative, to use their personal experiences and experiment with different roles. Resources such as tea sets can foster role play, encouraging communication and language development as children come up with scenarios, act out roles, negotiate rules and use a range of words and ideas.

Tuff tray tea party

Activity outline

- Place the tuff tray onto a solid surface such as the ground or a low table
- Add a little water to the tuff tray with the tea sets and spoons, ensuring there are enough tea cups, saucers, tea pots and spoons for babies and toddlers to explore together
- Babies can sit around the edge or inside the tuff tray with adult supervision as they explore the resources
- Model pouring water and filling cups narrating what you and babies are doing so they begin to hear language such as please, thank you, pour, full, empty, more
- Add metal jugs, sugar tongs, tea strainers and whisks for children to experiment with
- A rail made from a broom handle with hooks to hang from, a mug tree for jewellery, storage boxes, over the door organisers, folding storage hangers can all provide useful storage space
- Provide some jugs of water and invite children to make tea. If you add food colouring or fruity tea bags, it will help children see the water more clearly as they pour.

This activity is suitable for all ages and abilities with adult supervision.



Resources

- Lightweight plastic tea sets
- Food colouring or fruit tea bags
- Different sized spoons
- Tuff tray
- Water
- Jugs.

Learning opportunities include:

- Develop an understanding of mathematical concepts and vocabulary
- Be imaginative and use personal experience in role play
- Develop accuracy of pouring, hand-eye coordination
- Explore capacity, predict, test and problem solve
- Develop fine motor skills.

Ideas for different ages

Observe pre-school children in free play with the tuff tray tea party and listen to the rich language they use as they play.

Encourage mathematical thinking as they count cups and saucers.

Support predictions e.g. will they have enough tea for everyone or how many spoonfuls will fill a cup.

Share tea party themed books such as 'The Tiger Who Came to Tea' by Judith Kerr and 'Alice in Wonderland' by Lewis Carroll.



Top tip

Add different size scoops and containers in the water to introduce the language of measures.

Activity 4 Continued...



Make mud pies

Extension ideas

Add a range of tea set resources outdoors. Metal items work well indoors and out and lend themselves well to making mud pies.

Key vocabulary might include:

- Cup
- Saucer
- Teapot
- Full
- Empty
- More
- Less
- A lot
- Please
- Thank you
- Overflow
- Spill.



Further resources, links and stories:

EYFS Expressive Arts and Design - NDNA training

<https://bit.ly/3wcYIXP>

Continuous Provision - NDNA training

<https://bit.ly/3IVmRKb>

Let's Look at Schemas - NDNA training

<https://bit.ly/3XzYBRX>



Sensory water play



Explore together

National Day Nurseries Association

At NDNA, we don't just provide nursery membership, lobby government and offer training, we are dedicated to making a difference. We are a charity that believes in quality and sustainability so we put our members' businesses at the very heart of ours. We enhance, support, nurture, cherish and challenge.

Every year we run an annual Healthy Body, Happy Me campaign to encourage better health and happiness by giving nurseries FREE resources for play, learning and fun.

Get involved with our 2023 campaign and help keep your children happy and healthy.

Important: 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.



National Day Nurseries Association

National Day Nurseries Association

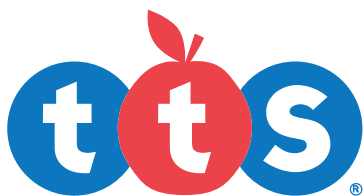
National Early Years Enterprise Centre, Longbow Close, Huddersfield HD2 1GQ
01484 407070 marketing@ndna.org.uk



#HealthyBodyHappyMe

★Brighter thinking
for early years

www.ndna.org.uk



Partner
National Day Nurseries Association

WATER PLAY WEDNESDAY

Inspire imaginations
and creativity with
TTS waterplay
resources



EY10049 Water Bowl Cascade

£349.99

Shop now

EARLY
YEARS

tts-group.co.uk



EY06904 Jumbo Guttering
and Channelling Set

£149.98



029457 Clear Waterflow
Channelling System

£179.99

AS AN NDNA MEMBER YOU GET...

20% OFF | ONE
ORDER*

10% OFF | EVERY
ORDER*

For your 20% discount quote **NDNA22** before March 31st 2023.

*Terms and conditions apply see our website for full details.