

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.

Activity: Treasure baskets

Treasure baskets are an exciting way to introduce babies to a variety of textures, sizes, shapes and unfamiliar objects.

Encouraging babies to explore the objects with their hands (and mouths) offers great stimulation for all their senses and helps them to make sense of the world around them.

Learning aims

- Explore a range of new and familiar objects
- Experience a range of differently sized and shaped objects
- React to changes in amount when those amounts are significant
- Respond to size - either very big or very small objects by trying to pick them up
- Become familiar with patterned objects.



Resources

- Circular basket about 15-25 cm in diameter with a flat bottom (if you are using a square or rectangular basket consider how to position it so the baby's legs don't prevent them from exploring)
- 20 or more objects for the basket – plastic objects and toys should be avoided. A good range of the items listed below are a good starting point
- Household objects: Wooden spoon, egg cup, curtain ring, dolly peg, spatula, small wooden bowl or dish and various small brushes (pastry brush, nail brush)
- Metal items: spoon, whisk, set of measuring cups, set of measuring spoons, tea strainer, scoops, napkin ring, small bowl or dish
- Natural objects: Pine cone, sea shells, wooden blocks, loofah (natural/ unbleached), sponge (natural/ unbleached), sheepskin swatch.

Activity outline

1. Plan to carry out the activity when the babies are alert to support their concentration

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2. Set aside an extended period of time so they can explore uninterrupted. Anything between 30 minutes to an hour (use your professional judgement to determine babies' interest levels)
3. Place the basket on a comfy surface for the baby such as a rug with neutral colours
4. Sit beside the baby allowing them to explore independently. This will promote babies to find out and explore, have their own ideas and be involved and concentrate
5. Ensure that they are exploring safely and intervene if needed (you can model a safer way to explore an item).

Extension ideas:

- Limit the frequency the baskets are used. Do not have them as part of the continuous provision and put them away when the session is over
- Add temporary objects which will boost the sensory value of the basket, such as muslin bags filled with herbs or a whole orange
- Bury favourite items if you observe the baby always chooses a particular object. This encourages them to engage with new items and develop a sense of measure as they empty the basket.

Extension ideas

Always remain close by and vigilant during a session with treasure baskets. The items included are not meant to be toys and therefore extra care must be taken while babies explore them.

NDNA products to support you with this activity:

- [Power of Play with Babies – Live Virtual Classroom training](#)
- [Brilliant Babies – online course](#)