

## Sensory Integration Activities

### **Sight and Hearing (Visual & Auditory Senses)**

#### **Fruit Bowling**

Materials- A bowl of round fruits such as apples, oranges, lemons, and a paper bag

Give the child a bowl of round fruits with different colors and sizes. Before beginning the game, the child must sort the fruits into different categories or orders. For example, the child can sort the fruits from largest to smallest or darkest to lightest. Next, place a paper bag 2-3 feet away from where the child is sitting. The child can roll each fruit into the paper bag.



After the child sorts the fruits, you can tie in language by asking your child to verbally state the color and/or type of fruit he/she chooses each time before rolling it into the bag. Verbal cuing or modeling may be necessary. Other benefits of the activity include visual discrimination, auditory memory, and word retrieval.

#### **Musical Plates**

Materials- Paper plates, stapler, pebbles, art supplies for coloring and decorating

Color and decorate the bottom sides of two paper plates. Put one plate face up and fill it with pebbles. Take the second plate and turn it upside down on top of the other plate. Staple the sides of the two plates together tightly. Now, your child can use this to shake the plate and make music! It is best to make at least 2 so that your child's friends/siblings can also participate. The best way to play this game is to sit in a circle and allow each child to shake their plates and make a rhythm. This is a great way to stimulate the auditory sense as well as practice turn taking.

There are many opportunities for verbal communication while coloring and decorating the paper plates. You can ask your child to choose his/her favorite crayon, label colors, or describe what they are drawing. Another good opportunity would be during the actual game. You can participate in the game by making your own musical plate. Once the game begins, you can shake your musical plate strongly or softly and ask the child to differentiate between "loud/quiet" and "fast/slow" using simple words. If the child is able to form full sentences, you can ask him/her to respond accordingly. Other benefits of the activity include auditory processing practice and strengthening social skills in a group setting.

### **Taste and Smell (Olfactory & Gustatory Senses)**

#### **Guess the Smell**

Materials- 10 containers, blindfold, 10 different scented items (coffee beans, lemon peel, bubble gum, etc.) Fill each container with a different scented item. Take turns tying a blindfold first on you and then the child. Each person will have a turn smelling one of the containers and trying to guess what the item inside might be.

One of the most effective ways to facilitate language during this activity is to talk about associated memories linked to each scent such as "This reminds me of our Christmas tree." You could model turn taking by saying, "my turn" each time the child takes off his/her blindfold. After a few turns, you can ask the child to do the same by verbally say, "my turn" each time you take off your blindfold. For more advanced speaking children, you can ask them to elaborate on the scent they think is in the container. For example, you can ask them to describe the smell in a few words. Other benefits of the activity include olfactory discrimination, memory, and attention practice.

#### **Food painting**

Materials- Peanut butter, marshmallows, crackers, icing, peanuts, construction paper, and paper towels Use the food items to decorate a piece of construction paper. Peanut butter can be used as glue to stick the other decorative foods onto the paper. While making the painting, encourage the child to paint his/her lips or

cheeks. Also, you can ask the child to kiss the marshmallows. This will help the child have a pleasant experience with foods that have different textures.

To facilitate language, you could encourage the child to talk about the different types of foods he/she is gluing on the construction paper. Some simple descriptions such as hard, soft, crunchy, sweet, salty, etc. may be verbalized. If the child is unable to describe the food items, it is beneficial to give them a binary choice. For example, you can facilitate a response by saying, "The marshmallow is white! Is it sweet or salty?" The facilitation techniques may need to be adjusted based on the child's language level. Other benefits of the activity include tactile discrimination and eye-hand coordination.



## Touch (Tactile Sense)

### **Shaving cream table**

Materials- Shaving cream, tray, paintbrush

Spray shaving cream onto a tray. Encourage the child to use his/her hands or a paint brush to play with the shaving cream. Introduce different objects to the game to make it more fun. For example, the child can paint plastic cars with the shaving cream.

Once you introduce different objects and toys into this activity, you can tie in language by asking the child to request which object he/she wants to play with. If the child is not cooperative, it is important to modify the environment in order to facilitate verbal expression. For instance, you can place the objects on top of a counter that the child cannot reach. Make sure that the child is able to see the objects. This is a great way to encourage the child to verbally request the object instead of simply reaching for it. Other benefits of the activity include tactile discrimination and eye-hand coordination.

### **Pretend Mummy**

Materials- Stretchy exercise band or crepe paper

Wrap the band tightly around the child's body. The pressure helps the child regulate and calm down.

This simplicity of this activity will provide you with many opportunities to communicate with your child. While you are wrapping the child with the band, you can ask him/her to count, say the alphabet, or sing a song. Another useful strategy is to ask the child whether he/she wants the wrap looser or tighter. If the child is unable to express his/her preference with those specific descriptions, you can ask him to say "more." Other benefits of the activity include proprioceptive input via deep pressure to muscles and joints.

## Balance & Movement (Vestibular Sense)

### **Stop, Drop & Roll**

Materials- Open grassy space outdoors, outdoors clothing

Child will stand 20-30 feet away from you on the grass. When you say "Go" the child will begin running and when you say "Stop, drop, & roll" the child will lie down on the ground and roll on the grass until he/she reaches you. To make the game more exciting, it is important to take turns.

-Same activity can be done indoors on carpet or a gym mat.

This activity provides the child with an opportunity to practice turn taking and verbally say "my turn." In order to tie in language, you can ask the child to say "Tag, you're it!" once he/she reaches you. Other benefits of the activity include vestibular input from rolling on the ground.

### **Exercise Fun**

Materials- Large stretchy fabric, elastic bands for tying

Wrap the fabric tightly around the child and measure the length. Add 8-10 inches to the measured length and size the fabric accordingly. Tie the fabric in the shape of a potato sack (make sure the head portion is open so that safety is not a concern.) The child will get inside the "body blanket" and perform arm and leg stretches.

To facilitate language, you could encourage the child to help make the body blanket with you. While shopping for the fabric, you can ask your child's opinion about color preferences. If your child accompanies you to the store, you can ask him/her to make a choice between fabrics by talking about the fabric being soft, stretchy, etc. In addition, number counting can be facilitated while measuring the child's height and the size of the fabric. This activity is a great form of exercise as well as a significant source of proprioceptive input via deep pressure to the muscles and joints.

## ***Body Awareness (Proprioceptive Sense)***

### ***Hug and Run Game***

Materials- Space big enough for a child to run

This game is very similar to the game of Tag. You and the child can take turns being the runner. Once the runner sees the other player, he/she must run and give them a big 5-10 second hug.

This game provides the child with deep pressure that may be beneficial for body awareness. The child's sensory preferences must be taken into consideration. For example, the intensity and duration of the hug may need to be adjusted for a child who prefers lighter contact.

A great way to facilitate language during this activity is by saying "I see you!" before the running begins. Once the child starts running and gives you a hug, you can provide verbal cues by saying "squeeze" in a tight voice. With enough repetition and modeling, the child can be asked to say the same thing while being hugged. Other benefits of this activity include tactile input from hugging, balance, gross motor skills and bilateral coordination from running.

### ***Up, Up and Away Kite***

Materials- Plastic bag, string, tape

Tie the end of the plastic bag into a knot. Use the tape to attach the string to the end with the knot.

This activity is a great way for the child to stay active outdoors. The child will run with the string and watch the bag fill up with air. The bag will fly in the air like a kite and the child will have to keep running.

While making the kite, there can be many opportunities for verbal exchange between you and your child. For example, you can place the string and tape in a place where the child can easily see but cannot reach. You can ask the child to bring you the tape and string. Closely monitor the child to see his/her reaction. This will encourage the child to verbally ask you for help. Another fun way to tie in language is by practicing prepositions such as up and down. Once the kite is in the air, you can ask your child, "Where is the kite?" If the child is unable to answer, provide him/her with a binary choice by asking, "Is it up or down?" Other benefits of this activity include gross motor skills, kinesthesia, and bilateral coordination.

### ***Bottle Fun***

Materials- Three 2-liter soda bottles, water, sand, pebbles

Fill the first bottle halfway full with water, the second bottle halfway full with sand, and the third bottle halfway full with pebbles. The child can carry the bottles, shake them, play pretend games selling or buying them, place into a box and push or pull, roll on the grass, bury in the sand and dig them out.

-Preparing the bottles can also be a fun activity for the child if you choose to paint and decorate the bottles.

There are many different ways to encourage verbal communication during this activity. One way to facilitate language is by discussing the different items you put into the bottles. You can ask the child to verbally request water, sand or pebbles. You can simplify this task by placing each item into a different colored box. If the child is unable to request by the specific object's name, he/she can say the color of the container. Another way to tie in language is by pouring very little amounts of the object into the bottle. This will motivate the child to ask for "more." Other benefits of the activity include proprioception, body awareness, and visual discrimination.

