

Fall Sensory Bin

Nature-themed sensory bins bring the outside indoors so your child can experience the objects with all their senses.



So much learning goes naturally into just being outside. Every season brings different smells, colors, textures, and even sounds. Fall is a particularly sensory season. Even if your child can't see pumpkins piled in front of the grocery store, for example, they can touch them, feel the ridged skin and the scratchy stem, and pick up a pumpkin and feel how heavy or light it is. What sound do leaves make when you kick a pile of them on the grass? Pinecones are prickly, just like their needles.

However, some children with blindness or visual impairment are easily overwhelmed by new textures or smells; others have limited mobility that makes getting outside more challenging. A fall sensory bin makes this season more accessible, and it's easy for families to assemble and experience together.

What Is a Sensory Bin?

A sensory bin is a storage tub, dish pan, or other container filled with things you can touch, smell, listen to, or even taste with your child who is visually impaired.

To play with the bin, just pick up and experience the items. Talk about their color. Mention other things in your home or your yard that are the same color. Use other meaningful words to describe the object – its shape, texture, or the sound it makes – so your child will recognize the object in other ways besides visually. If your child eats by mouth, talk about the foods your child is eating, and maybe one of them is in the sensory bin, such as an apple!

As you explore the bin together, take turns between letting your child explore quietly on their own and narrating to your child about what they're doing. "You found the pumpkin! The stem is rough. That rock is bumpy. Bang, bang, bang on the bowl – that's loud! You put the rock back in the bowl."

Don't forget to be sensitive to your child's body movements, vocalizations, and facial expressions. For some children, introducing new items can feel a bit overwhelming. For children who are hesitant to touch new objects, try introducing new items one at a time or at their feet first to allow them to "warm up" to the idea.

Suggested Materials for a Fall Sensory Bin

- Small pumpkins and gourds (use assorted sizes and shapes)
- Pinecones
- Pine needles
- Corn cobs or corn husks
- Dry leaves
- Sticks or small logs
- Seasonal flowers such as chrysanthemums or asters
- Dried prairie grasses
- Whole apples
- Small rocks

