

My Daily Routine Sensory Bin



Children with visual impairments learn with their hands. Ready for some hands-on tactile play? A small bin, tray, or bucket is the perfect container for a variety of sensory experiences.

In this experience we will make a sensory bin using objects at home that are used during your child's natural routine, such as their toothbrush, their favorite cup, or comb. Your child will explore by touching, looking, tasting, and listening to these objects. Your child can also learn to compare objects, play in/out games, dump and fill, transfer objects from right hand to left, and learn to pretend play.

This experience also gives the child additional time for manipulation and play with those objects, to increase their vocabulary, and to help gain a deeper understanding of their uses, which is important for independent living.

Duration

This activity will take 5 to 15 minutes depending on your child's mood and interest.

Materials Required

- Plastic bin, bowl (plastic or metal), or a pot. Consider using what you already have at home. Think about contrast if your child will be using their vision. For example, if the objects are mostly light colored, use a dark-colored bowl. A metal bowl will create more sound and reflection.
- Objects from your child's natural routine such as a spoon, cup, feeding tube, toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, brush, mirror, sponge, washcloth or part of a washcloth, sock, shoe, mitten. Brainstorm with your Early Intervention Teacher of the Visually Impaired (EI-TVI) for additional ideas.
- Optional: Put dried beans, rice, cotton balls, Fruit Loops, shredded paper, flax seed, water, or other filler into the container along with the objects you give your child. It's up to your discretion to use small fillers. Some children might put things in their mouth, and this will create a choking hazard.
- Some children are more responsive to a certain color. If so, choose objects or filler in a color that your child responds to best.

Activity Steps

1. Get the container and gather the objects. You can have this already done before you begin the activity, or you can do it with your child.
2. Choose a seat for your child. Your child can sit in their highchair or other comfortable seat, on the floor with support as needed, or your child can sit on your lap.
3. You might decide to sit so you are facing your child. This is a nice position for showing facial expression and modeling. You might decide to sit behind your child. This can make hand-under-hand easier to implement.
4. If your child is hesitant to touch or explore the objects, use hand-under-hand. For children who are blind or visually impaired, their hands are their eyes. Hand-under-hand is an invitation from a caregiver to a child to explore and learn together. It is the most respectful way to engage because it provides a sense of safety while giving the child the control to choose whether to join the activity. In hand-under-hand, the adult puts their hand under the child's hand and gently guides the child through an activity such as touching a new object or using a tool like scooping with a spoon. The child chooses whether to participate by either keeping their hands on the adults' or by pulling their hands away. Giving a child the choice to participate in an activity promotes independence by allowing them to become an **active learner** rather than a passive participant.
5. As your child touches or picks up an object, label it. For example, "Toothbrush, you are holding your toothbrush!"

6. Pretend to use the objects. For example, pretend to brush your teeth and talk about what you are doing. "I'm brushing my teeth." Encourage your child to pretend to brush their teeth as well.
7. If your child picks up two different objects, talk about how they are similar ("The toothbrush and your hairbrush both have bristles."), or different ("Your comb has pointed teeth, and your mirror is smooth.").
8. If there is a filler, your child can practice scooping with their spoon and dumping and filling with the cup.
9. You can use the sensory bin to practice trading objects or giving you a requested object.
10. You can introduce sequencing by counting the objects in the bin as your child takes them out or plays with them.

Tips

- The materials listed above are suggestions only. Use what you have at home. Choose what make sense for your child. Think about the number of objects and the grouping that makes sense. Do you want your bin focused on bath time only or a variety of routines?
- This sensory bin can grow. You might start with only three things in your bin, but then you can expand it to meet the needs of your child. Limiting the number of items in the sensory bin helps children who have difficulty with complexity.
- It is good for children with visual impairment to know where things come from and where they are kept. For example, when getting the toothbrush, you can travel to the bathroom with your child. While traveling, talk about where you are going and what is kept in that location. Show them where the toothbrush is kept.

Extension Activities

- Pretend play with a doll or stuffed animal. If the child is holding a toothbrush, pretend to brush the doll's teeth. Pretend play has been linked to emotion regulation, language skills, cognitive reasoning, and problem-solving skills.
- If you look on Pinterest, you'll find a sensory bin for every theme imaginable. Think about other sensory bins you can make using objects you have at home. You can create a sensory bin about a color, a holiday, or an activity. You can also make a sensory bin about one routine, such as bath time. For ideas go to <https://www.asharedvision.org/lets-play.html>.
- This is a fun experience for your child to do with siblings, grandparents, and/or friends. It gives the opportunity for your child to take turns, socialize, and share ideas. Choose a larger container for your objects so everyone can join in the fun.

- Make up songs or use songs from YouTube that go with the objects in the sensory bin. For example: “Toothbrush, toothbrush, brush, brush, brush my teeth.” Go to this link for an example of a song about a toothbrush on YouTube: https://youtu.be/K26y_Ca9hoc.
- Read a book to your child about brushing teeth, eating, doing hair, washing up, and/or dressing. Following are possible suggestions: Brush, Brush, Brush! by Alicia Padron, Eating the Alphabet by Lois Ehlert, Don't You Dare Brush My Hair! by Rosie Greening, Wash, Wash, Wash! by Pamela Chanko, or My Clothes/ Mi Ropa by Rebecca Emberley (this book is available in braille from Seedlings.)
- This song is good for hand washing. To the tune of “Are You Sleeping/Frere Jacques,” try “Tops and bottoms, tops, and bottoms/In between, in between/Wash your hands all over/Wash your hands all over/Now we’re clean, now we’re clean.”
- Why are routines so important to a child who is visually impaired? Learn more at <https://familyconnect.org/browse-by-age/infants-and-toddlers/parenting-and-family-life-iaandt/routines-tools-for-your-childs-development>.