

## Pack Your Purse! Choice Making With Everyday Bags



This learning experience is inspired by a hot-pink, sparkly, furry purse that one of our parents gave their very young daughter who was visually impaired. The purse was a big hit! Not only was the color and texture appealing, but the purse also offered so many choice-making opportunities about what goes inside it or be taken out. The caregiver and their daughter could also talk about how many things were in the purse and whether the purse was light or heavy. Of course, a purse is very practical because it holds important things like money and car keys.

No matter what trip you're going on – to school, the store, Grandma's house, or a vacation – you always pack a bag, whether it's your purse, "murse," backpack, or suitcase. Who knew a little pink purse had so much power to teach all these concepts?

You don't need a purse for this learning experience either. Any bag or container will work, but it's easier if it's your child's favorite.

## **Duration**

This activity will take 15 to 30 minutes depending on your child's mood and interest.

## **Materials Required**

- A purse, small backpack, or other favorite bag, in your child's preferred size, color, and texture
- Five to 10 of your child's favorite objects to put in the purse, such as keys, a water bottle, a small toy, etc.
- A rimmed cookie sheet, your child's feeding tray, or a high-contrast blanket to examine the items when they're not in the purse

## **Activity Steps**

1. Get your child's favorite purse, backpack, or other bag and choose a comfortable location to pack and unpack it, such as the kitchen table or seated on the floor. Your child should be in a supportive, seating position.
2. Start the activity by touching the purse to your child's forearm and saying, "Here's your purse! Can you hold it?"
3. Allow your child to touch their purse and explore it with all their senses. Talk about the color and texture of the purse. Does the purse have a handle or a strap? Does it zip, buckle, or snap together? What sound does it make when you open or shut it, or when you shake it?
4. Face your child while you talk about the purse so you can see how they indicate their preferences for the next steps of this activity. For example, look for a change in facial expression, listen for vocalization, or watch for different gestures and body movement.
5. Now, you can say, "We're going to put some of your favorite things in your purse. What should we put inside your purse?" Using wait time, allow your child to indicate their choices. They might smile, reach, or use a visual gaze toward a favorite object.
6. You might say, "Here's your favorite teddy bear. Do you want to put it in your purse? Do you want to pack this book or your water bottle?" If your child doesn't respond, try some different preferred items. Maybe an item will be too big for the purse.

7. After you've added a few items, talk about the weight of the purse. "Wow, your purse is getting heavy! Let's take out some things to make the purse lighter." Shake the purse and listen to what's inside. "I hear the keys in your purse!"
8. Now that the purse is packed, have your child explore holding the purse on various parts of their body. "Grandma carries her purse on her shoulder, but your sister wears a backpack on her back when she goes to school."
9. Then have your child try finding something inside their purse. "Let's look for your book. Something feels hard inside your purse. Oh, you found your book! Are those chocolate cookies still in your purse? Let's see if we can smell them."
10. Now, you can try dumping the contents of the purse on your tray or the blanket. This might reengage your child's interest, too, if they're getting bored with the activity. Allow your child to explore the contents of the purse and choose things to put back in the purse. Count out loud how many items your child is putting in or taking out of their purse. Is there a special order that you pack your purse in?
11. When your child loses interest in the activity, you can end the activity by saying, "We're all done packing your purse. Now we're ready to go on our errand!" Or "Let's put your purse in a special place, so we know where to find it for our next trip."

### **Tips**

- If your child is fixated on one item in the purse, then dump out the contents of the purse and let them experience that item.
- Be cautious about only adding favorite things in the purse because they might distract your child from doing the activity. Try some different, least preferred items to mix things up.
- Give your child enough wait time to think about what to put in or take out of their purse.
- Make sure your child can hold their purse during the activity, so your child knows the purse belongs to them and that they've selected the items to go inside the purse. This gives your child more control over the activity. Children who have stronger self-determination skills become effective advocates for themselves and have more control over their lives as they grow older.

### **Extension Activities**

- Make an experience book about an outing you had and what things you brought in your purse or you collected in your purse when you were out that day.

- Make a sensory bin with the items you might put in a purse or backpack. A purse or backpack is just a sensory bin with a strap!
- Explore the house to find where purses and backpacks are kept. Are they hanging from a hook or a door handle? Are they resting on a dresser or a table?
- Read some books about purses. Our favorites include [My Perfectly Purple Sticker and Doodling Purse](#), [My Pretty Pink Counting Purse](#), and [Skip Hop: My Backpack!](#).
- Sing songs about packing like these favorites: [https://youtu.be/\\_1445JRNtTo](https://youtu.be/_1445JRNtTo) and <https://youtu.be/aVSndZHNEQc>
- Talk about some other occasions when you might pack something, such as a sandwich in a lunch box, a suitcase for a trip, or boxes to ship or store something. Now that's a lot to "unpack"!
- Explore other family members' purses or bags. This is a great time to involve siblings, grandparents, and extended family members. For example, "Grandma is coming over. Do you think she will bring a purse or a shopping bag? What will be in it? How heavy will it be?" "Your sister is coming home from school soon. How many books will be in her backpack?"