

Splish, Splash - Let's Take a Bath



Do you find bath time stressful? Does your child cry at the sound of running water? Do they find it overwhelming to sit in a big tub or feel a squishy sponge of warm, soapy water on their skin? You are not alone! This activity introduces the concepts of water, bathing, and water play in a fun, accessible way. The activity is appropriate whether your child loves taking a bath or is just starting to establish a bath-time routine.

Duration

This activity may range from 15 to 45 minutes or more depending upon your child.

Materials Required

- Clear plastic container or a baby tub
- Bath toys that float (rubber duck, sponge, balls, empty plastic bottle), sink (measuring spoons, full bottle of baby soap, a favorite toy car or truck), or squirt water
- Stackable plastic cups
- Washcloth, small sponges in different colors and shapes
- A towel for drying hands and feet

Activity Steps

1. Place the plastic container or baby tub inside your regular bathtub. Fill the plastic bin or baby tub about half full with room-temperature or lukewarm tap water. This will allow you both to sit in the empty tub while playing with the water in the smaller tub or container, feel the base and walls of the big tub, and begin to recognize the location of the big bathtub in your house.
2. Create a cue for bath time so your child will associate the cue with this routine. A bath cue might be rubbing a dry washcloth on your child's feet or the sound of running water in the bathtub.
3. Position your child in front of you or on your lap so that she can look at the bin and reach the water with her hands or feet. Sometimes just dipping a finger or hand in and out of the water might be enough for a sensitive child. Use hand-under-hand to guide your child if they are afraid to touch the water. Explain that it's the same water you drink but in a bigger container! Describe the water as your child explores the tub. "It's warm!" "Brrr, this water is getting cold!"
4. Label sounds as your child makes them. "Splash! You're making a big noise!" "Glug, glug, glug, the bottle is filling up with water."
5. As you explain what you're doing, add a bath toy like a rubber duck to the container or tub.
6. Use narration to explain what happens to the toys. Invite your child to touch the toy. Use hand-under-hand to start. Allow your child to touch independently if they would like, but don't force it. Notice how the toy is floating on the water. What happens when you push the toy under the water? It pops back up! When a toy sinks, where does it go? Use narration to explain what happens to the toys in the water.

7. Introduce the cups. Encourage your child to touch it and hold it. You could say, "Let's put the cup in the water. Now, you're filling the cup with water. The cup is full. You're turning the cup over. Uh, oh, the cup is empty now!" Talk about the cup's attributes. Introduce the other cups. "That cup is smaller than this one. Let's see how much water we can put in that cup."
8. Now introduce the washcloth or sponges. Touch your child's hand or feet with the washcloth or sponge. Label the body parts as you touch them. "Daddy's touching Benny's hand!" Make a game out of counting fingers or toes. Talk about what sounds you hear when you squeeze the sponge or lift the washcloth out of the water. Now put them back in the water.
9. Explore your child's emotions to discover how they are feeling during bath time. Acknowledge those feelings by saying, for example, "Benny is smiling; he loves splashing in the water." Or "Benny is crying. He doesn't like water in his eyes!"
10. End the activity with a consistent "all-done-with-bath-time" cue. Use the hand towel to dry your child's hands and feet. You could say, "We're all done with bath time. Your hands are wet. Now let's make them dry with this towel." For some children just having a towel nearby makes them feel less anxious about getting wet.

Tips

- Never leave your child unattended with water. Even just to grab a toy, answer the phone, or grab a towel, BRING BABY WITH YOU!
- Keep the display simple and uncluttered so it's not too overwhelming for your child. Gradually introduce new materials as your child becomes accustomed to this routine.



“Wet” Your Curiosity

- Read some books together about bath time. Some favorites include DK’s Bathtime Peekaboo! (which you can order in braille/print), Sandra Boynton’s Bath Time!, and Clifford’s Bathtime by Norman Bridwell.
- Make a book about bath time. This video is a good example of a bath time book. https://cdnapisec.kaltura.com/index.php/extwidget/preview/partner_id/2017271/uiconf_id/34130341/entry_id/1_pytmztp7/embed/dynamic
- Make a routines box about bath time. Fill a box with materials used during bath time such as a washcloth, a bath toy, a travel container filled with your baby’s body wash, a fun bath time book. Use this box to talk about what happens during bath time and remember the experience together.
- Sing a song about bath time. 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.”
- What does a good bath-time routine include? 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-iandt/routines-tools-for-your-childs-development>.

- Explore water in different ways outside the bathtub or sink. Pour some room temperature water on a tray and allow your child to touch or splash the water with their hands or feet. Add water toys or waterproof glowing cubes to encourage more tactile play.
- Paint the sidewalk. Bring a bowl of water and a small paint brush outside or to the park. Dip the brush in the bowl and let your child try painting the sidewalk, driveway, or other surfaces. Paint rollers and sponges are fun to paint with, too!
- It's raining. Fill a small spray bottle with water and "sprinkle" your child's hands or feet with water. Spray other body parts when your child is comfortable with the feeling of sprinkles. Let your child practice spraying water with the bottle too – this is a great way to strengthen little hands.
- Popsicle painting will keep you cool on hot summer days. Mix a few drops of food coloring with water, pour the liquid into ice cube trays, insert a popsicle stick, and freeze to make popsicle painters.
- When it's raining, go outside and feel the rain on your face or splash in a puddle.