

**LIZELLE KEYSER**  
**Paediatric Occupational Therapist**

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**SUMMER FUN!**  
**SENSORY PLAY**

The following are a range of messy play activities to be played inside or outside. It is great fun and loved by kids. Please note that I don't know of any adverse reactions, but please make and play with the activities at your own discretion. These are non-edible. If they are 'taste-safe' I've added it in the description. Taste safe means that it is not known to be harmful for children to put in their mouth and taste, but should not be eaten as a snack in large quantities. It is worth using a cheap shower curtain underneath some of these activities, for easy clean up. Have fun!

**Discovery bottle - Ocean in a bottle:**

<https://happyhooligans.ca/ocean-in-bottle/>

Items needed:

- water
- cooking oil
- blue food colouring
- large clear, plastic bottle (2 litre pop bottle, shampoo bottle, mouthwash bottle etc.)  
**TIP:** a mouthwash bottle is perfect, as it has a child-proof lid which prevents the kids from opening it when playing with it.
- funnel

How to make:

- Fill approximately 1/3 of your bottle with water.
- Add several drops of food colouring.
- Have your child shake the bottle to disperse the food colouring.
- Now, simply top up the bottle with oil. I filled ours right to the top and then popped the lid on.
- Tip the bottle upside down and watch your ocean come to life.



**Sensory Walk:**

<https://teachingmama.org/sensory-walk-exploring-the-sense-of-touch/>

Items needed:

- plastic tubs
- material to fill the tub (water beads, sand, dry black beans, colored water [drops of food colouring and water], shaving cream)
- towels

How to make: Setting up a sensory walk -

- In the pictures they used 7 tubs. You could use however many you'd like!

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- When you design your sensory walk, make sure to keep in mind times when kids would need to clean their feet off before stepping into another bin (ex: shaving cream needs to be cleaned off before stepping into sand!).
- Here's the order of how the sensory walk was designed in the photo: dry black beans, water beads, blue water, towel, sand, shaving cream, green water, and towel.



- Let your child walk through the bins. Talk with them how the different textures feel under their feet. Some might feel hard, soft, cold, squishy, fluffy, cold etc.
- Make sure that they dry their feet off after the coloured water, to not make the sand stick to it.
- Other ideas: If they get bored with the sensory walk, you can use the tubs to add some toys to play in as sensory bins.

**Colourful Bubble Foam:**

<https://mamapapabubba.com/2013/08/14/ridiculously-fun-colourful-bubble-foam/>

Items needed:

- 2 tablespoons of dishwashing liquid
- $\frac{2}{3}$  a cup of warm water
- Few drops of food colouring



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- Mixing bowl
- Electric mixer

How to make:

- To make our foam, add 2 tablespoons of dishwashing liquid, 2/3 a cup of warm water, and 2 drops of gel food colouring (or 4 or 5 of liquid) to the machine's bowl.
- Mix on its highest speed, and let it whip the mixture into foam for 2 solid minutes. The result was this thick, luxurious foam that formed soft peaks when a spoon was lifted out of it.
- To use in sensory bins or just playing.

**Puffy sidewalk paint:**

<https://kidsactivitiesblog.com/5509/fizzing-sidewalk-paint/>

Items needed:

- A container of baking soda
- 1/2 cup of cornstarch
- Warm (almost hot) Water
- Food coloring
- Vinegar in a spray bottle



How to make:

- Mix the dry ingredients and then add water (possibly around a cup), stirring until it's not too thick.
- This paint dries very quickly – but washes off with ease!
- Let an adult spray the painted drawing with vinegar and watch the fizz appear.

**Goop:**

<https://happyhooligans.ca/2-ingredient-goop-recipe/>

Items needed: (Taste-safe)

- cornflour (about 2 cups)
- cold water (about 1 cup)
- shallow pan, bin or baking sheet
- food colouring



How to make:

- Place the cornflour in the tray. Let the kids explore it.
- Then put the water in the tray and let the kids mix it with their hands.
- You can add a few drops of food colouring to the water beforehand, or to the goop afterwards, when mixed.

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- You know when the consistency is correct when the goop will become solid when you squeeze it or push it around on the tray, and it will transform back into an oozing liquid when you release it.
- Easy to clean by washing with soapy water.
- Keep in an air-tight container for a few days.

**Clean mud:**

<https://happyhooligans.ca/frozen-clean-mud/>

**Items needed:**

- roll of toilet paper
- bar of soap (any mild white soap will do)
- blue food colouring
- warm water
- glitter
- shallow storage container
- grater



**How to make:**

- Start by having your kids take all the toilet paper off the roll. Make it fun by tossing the roll high into the air and letting it fall to the ground. Then they can throw, pull and kick it around the yard until the roll is empty.
- Grate the soap. If it is safe to do so, your child can do the grating (e.g. if they've done it before).
- Combine the soap and toilet paper in your container.
- Add several drops of blue food colouring to 1 cup of very warm water, and pour it over the soap and toilet paper.
- Now, mash, mix and mush the water, soap and toilet paper all together.
- You'll have to work it for several minutes until it becomes a moldable, mucky and mushy dough. Because every brand of toilet paper is different when it comes to roll-size and paper thickness, you may have to add more water or toilet paper.
- Finish by adding a generous amount of blue and silver glitter to your clean mud to give a Frozen effect. You can also use other colours of glitter and add small toys and plastic animals to set your scene. Some fairy mud:



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**Slime:**

**Note:** A lot of recipes online are from the USA, thus we do not always have the exact ingredients in UK. I've chosen recipes which were made in the UK. **Slime is not edible.** Slime can be very sticky. It is best to wear old clothes. If it gets stuck in hair or on clothes, try to remove the excess from it. Clean it over a sink. One option is to use white vinegar. Pour it onto the slime and use a scrub brush to brush it off. You might need to use a few attempts of vinegar. The vinegar helps dissolve the slime. Another option is to use lots of dish soap on the slime and rub it together until clean. Then put the garment in the wash. Do not wash clothes with slime on, as it will only spread to other clothing.  
<https://littlebinsforlittlehands.com/remove-slime-from-clothes/>

Items needed:

- 100ml PVA white or clear glue (children's craft glue or CE marked glue)
- ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- food colouring
- 1 tsp contact lens cleaning solution (not the saline solution)
- glitter (optional)



How to make:

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/how-make-slime>

- This method makes a ball of flexible slime close to silly putty in texture. It stays clean in your hands.
- Squeeze the glue into a mixing bowl (look for a bottle in a 100ml size if possible so you won't have to measure it out). Add the bicarbonate of soda and mix well.
- Add a drop or two of your chosen gel food colouring. Less colouring gives a pastel colour; the more you add, the brighter the colour. Mix until well incorporated.
- Add the contact lens solution and mix. The slime will begin to form, going stringy before coming away clean from the bowl into a ball.
- Once it has formed, take it out and knead it with your hands. It will be sticky at first but after about 30 seconds you'll have a smooth and pliable ball. Add glitter at this point, if desired, and work in with your hands. Store in a pot with a lid.
- Alternatives:



How to make it gloopier? Try adding less than 1 tsp contact lens solution, mixing it in drop by drop until it just goes stringy and begins to come away from the bowl. Then knead.

I'd like fluffier slime: Try adding a small blob of shaving foam.

I'd like more slime: You can double or triple the quantities in the recipe.

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My slime is too sticky, even after kneading: Try adding a drop more contact lens solution.

My slime won't come together at all: Did you use saline solution? This cleans contact lenses but doesn't work for slime – try a branded contact lens solution instead.

I want marbled or unicorn slime: Make in two or more different colours, add glitter if you like, and roll the batches of slime into rough sausage shapes. Stack next to each other then twirl together in a plait and knead.

You can find loads of other slime ideas here:

<https://littlebinsforlittlehands.com/homemade-slime-recipe/>

**Cloud Dough:**

<https://kidsactivitiesblog.com/53524/toddler-safe-cloud-dough/>

Items needed: (taste safe)

- 8 cups Flour
- 1 cup Vegetable Oil
- Add non-toxic paint powder or few drops of food colouring
- Potato Masher or Pastry Cutter & Wooden Spoon

How to make:

- In a large bowl, stir together the vegetable oil and flour.
- Add the paint/food colouring, give it another stir.
- Then using a pastry cutter or potato masher, work the dough for several minutes until the colour is uniform and the ingredients are soft, silky, and well-mixed.
- Transfer your dough to a shallow storage container and add spoons, scoops, bowls, cookie cutters, and plastic molds.
- Your kids will have a blast stirring, mixing, scooping, pouring and molding their cloud dough.
- Store in an airtight container.



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**Salt dough:**

<https://theimaginationtree.com/rainbow-glitter-salt-dough-recipe/>

Items needed: (Taste safe)

- 2 cups plain flour (all purpose)
- 2 cups salt
- 1 cup warm water (add a little more if too dry but start with this amount)
- Glitter in different colours
- Food colouring

How to make:

- Mix the dry ingredients together in a large bowl, then stir in the warm water slowly. The mixture should be a little sticky, but as you continue to mix it thoroughly it will become like a regular dough.
- At this stage turn it out on a countertop and begin to knead it for a couple of minutes until it is soft, smooth and not at all sticky. As with all these recipes it's possible to add too much or too little water, so just balance the other ingredients to adjust it if it goes wrong.
- Then separate the dough into 7 balls of equal size and push a dent into each one. Into the dents add a small amount of each of the gel colours/food colouring, then fold the doughs over and over until the colours are mixed in (try to avoid touching the gel directly as it does stain for a few hours.) It takes a bit of work to get the colour completely through the dough but it's worth it and great for those little hands too!
- Let the kids make different models with the clay.
- Once they had finished their designs we popped them on a baking tray and put them in the oven on very low heat to "air dry" them for 3 hours. Ours was turned to about 100 degrees C (approx 210 degrees F). If your models are thick they will definitely need to be turned over during the process and may even need another few hours in there. We try and keep ours just half an inch thick at most.



**Painted salt sculptures:**

<https://www.funathomewithkids.com/2014/04/painted-salt-sculptures.html>

Items needed:

- Some sort of mold (sandcastle, drinking glass, anything you can think of!)
- Table salt
- Water
- Liquid watercolor or diluted food colouring
- Eye dropper (paint brush can work, but the bristles can be too rough)

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How to make:

- Add 3 cups of salt and 3 teaspoons of water to a bowl. Stir extremely well - every bit of salt should appear wet/crumbly. If there is still dry salt, continue to stir. It shouldn't be necessary to add more water, but if for some reason after a lot of stirring you still have dry patches of salt, add 1/4 teaspoon of water. Once your salt is uniformly crumbly and damp, spoon or pour it into your mold and press hard to compact it.
- Leave it in the mold for at least 12 hours (24 hours or more is best). After that, you can flip it over and it should slide out of the mold. Allow it to dry for an additional 12 or more hours (24 hours or more is ideal) after it's been removed from the mold.
- Because it takes so much time to dry, I made these after the kids were asleep one night, and didn't mention it to them until they were ready (so they didn't get frustrated with the dry times).
- Check that it is dry and solid to the touch before painting it with liquid watercolors (or dilute food coloring). Before painting it, transfer it to a container or paint it in a spot where you can leave it to dry undisturbed for 12 or more hours. Once painted, it will be very delicate until it dries once again and moving it by hand will result in a crumbled sculpture.
- Once it has completely dried, it is pretty solid. I'm sure if you dropped it, it would shatter, but you can easily handle/move it. You can keep the sculptures on display, or you can break them with a hammer or mallet and use the salt for sensory play or art!



### Galaxy Play dough:

<https://kidsactivitiesblog.com/85982/galaxy-playdough/>

Items needed: (1 batch of playdough/colour)

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 cup salt
- 1 TBSP vegetable oil
- 1 TSP Cream of Tartar
- Purple, turquoise, and pink food coloring
- Pink, turquoise, and silver glitter
- Silver glitter stars



How to make:

- Stir all of the ingredients (except the glitter) together in a saucepan. Cook over medium heat until the playdough mixture thickens and clumps together. Dump the playdough onto the counter and cool.

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- After the playdough is cool to the touch, combine all 3 colors together. Knead gently to create a beautiful, marbled effect.
- Pour the glitter onto the playdough and gently mix it in.

**Non-cook play dough:**

<https://tinkerlab.com/no-cook-play-dough/>

Items needed: (Taste safe)

- 1 1/4 cup salt
- 1 1/2 tbsp. cream of tartar
- 2.5 cups flour
- 5 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 2.5 cups water
- Food coloring or liquid watercolors

How to make:

- Mix the first three ingredients together
- Boil water
- Mix the water and oil together in a small bowl
- Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and mix until the dough comes together.



BUG FOSSILS | A PLAY DOUGH

**Coloured Dry rice:**

<https://happyhooligans.ca/rainbow-rice/>

Items needed: (Taste safe)

- 1 cup of plain rice
- food colouring
- 1tsp vinegar
- food storage bag or empty yogurt container

How to make:

- Place rice in the bag or container.
- Place a few drops of food colouring on rice.
- Place 1 teaspoon of vinegar on rice (to keep hands from staining).
- Close the bag or container and shake. You will notice the rice changing colour.
- Spread the rice on a plate to dry. You might need to leave overnight to dry.
- When dry, store in a closed bag/container, to reuse.

Play: <http://twinmomrefreshed.com/easter-sensory-bins-for-toddlers/>

- Use the plain or coloured rice for sensory play.
- Place the coloured rice in a large container with cups and spoons.



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- Show your child to scoop and pour. You can also add their favorite toys within to play.
- Extra ideas:



**Coloured Dry pasta:**

<https://www.kidspot.com.au/things-to-do/activity-articles/make-coloured-pasta-jewellery/news-story/4628efd2d7aba9244b24f4d894c6dc9a>

Items needed: (Taste safe)

- Dry pasta
- food storage bags
- food colouring
- hand sanitizer or vinegar
- plates/bowls



How to make:

- Divide the pasta into food storage bags.
- Put a squirt of hand sanitizer in the bag for the base and shake the bag to help it cover the pasta. (If you are concerned that your child might put the pasta to their mouth, I would suggest to rather use a bit of vinegar as the base, rather than hand sanitizer)
- Put a few drops of food colouring, one colour in each bag.
- Let the air out of the bag and close the bag.
- Shake the bag, for the food colouring to mix with the pasta.
- Pour the pasta onto a plate or bowl and let it dry.



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Play:

- Sensory bin: Put the pasta with other toys, scoops and bowls for your child to explore.
- Extra ideas: Place some pipe cleaners in foam/box or styrofoam. Let them lace the coloured pasta into and onto the pipe cleaners to make crazy pasta sculptures:



**Coloured Shredded paper:**

<https://www.theottoolbox.com/valentines-day-sensory-binand-dying/>

Items needed:

- Two bags
- shredded paper
- food colouring
- water
- large box or container (to dry paper in)

How to make:

- Place the one bag into the other bag. Place the shredded paper in a bag. The two bags are used to help contain any possible mess.
- Place about 10 drops of food colouring on paper. The amount of food colouring would depend on how much paper you are colouring.
- Add a few drops of water also on the paper.
- Close the inside bag with a tight knot and then the outside bag with another tight knot.
- Let your child help you to shake the bag, until the colouring has coloured all the paper.
- Place the wet shredded paper in a box or large container, spread out.
- Let it dry in a safe space for a few days.



Play:

- Some children love shredded paper, especially to throw it in the air and watching it drop to the ground.
- Use the plain or coloured shredded paper for sensory play.
- Place the coloured shredded paper in a large container with different objects which hide inside e.g. make red shredded paper with heart cookie cutters and heart objects;

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use blue shredded paper (as if the sea) with fish and sea creatures hiding or green shredded paper (as the grass) with farm animals hiding.

- Give to your child to play.
- Extra ideas:



**Coloured rainbow spaghetti (cooked):**

<https://littlelearningclub.com/rainbow-spaghetti-sensory-activity/>

Items needed: (Taste safe)

- Spaghetti
- Oil
- food colouring



How to make:

- Cook the spaghetti as indicated on the packet.
- When cooked rinse in cool water to keep it from sticking together.
- Once drained and cooled, add a small amount (few drops) of oil and toss.
- Add a few drops of food colouring and mix well.
- Lay the spaghetti on some parchment paper to dry (for about an hour).
- Cleaning hack: Put an old or cheap shower curtain down, where they will play. Afterwards, you can collect the shower curtain and funnel the spaghetti back in the container. Keep in the fridge to use again.



Play:

- Place in a large container for kids to play with.
- Some children love to play with messy play, throwing it in the air and watching it move and fall to the ground. These are ideal for children who find messy play activities calming.
- Some more ideas:



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**Messy play with ice:**

**NOTE:** If your child tends to put things to their mouth and swallow, you need to make sure that the ice is not a choking hazard.

Items needed: (Taste safe)

- Ice blocks (various sizes)
- water
- bowls
- spoons
- smaller containers
- food colouring
- hammer (optional)



How to make:

- Make ice cubes in the freezer. Place the ice cubes in a bowl.
- This is great for outside play when it is warm. Place various size bowls with spoons and smaller containers outside. Put water with some food colouring in one bowl. Place the ice cubes in another bowl.
- You can even offer more than one colour e.g. blue water (water with a drop of blue food colouring) and another bowl with yellow water (water with a drop of yellow food colouring). When these are mixed during play, the colour changes to green.
- Another option: Freeze small toys inside the ice cubes for further discovery.
- Some more ideas:



**Jelly Play:**

<https://besttoys4toddlers.com/jelly-sensory-play-ideas-kids/>

Items needed: (Taste safe)

- jelly (you can make one colour or a few colours)
- small plastic toys
- small assorted kitchen containers such as ice trays
- small cups and spoons

How to make:

- Make jelly until it is set.



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- Provide your child with a sensory bin of jelly, with small kitchen utensils to play with.
- Remember, it is ok if they put this to their mouth, but if not; that is also fine.
- Your child explores jelly in play.
- Some more ideas:



rainbow gelatin  
**SENSORY PLAY**



messy play with  
**JELLO**



**Sensory bins:**

<https://happyhooligans.ca/sensory-bins/>

Sensory bins are great to entertain and teach your child, and to facilitate creative thinking and fine-motor development. You can use the above mixtures to use within sensory bins.

Before you make your sensory bin, it is worth to consider and decide on:

- what kind of container to use for your sensory bin e.g. shallow plastic container or cardboard box
- a theme for your sensory bin e.g. dino's, farm, ocean, construction, fairies are always a winner
- what to use as a base for your sensory bin e.g. rice, lentils, pasta, oatmeal, mud, sand, coffee beans, dried coffee grounds, lentils, corn kernels, bird seed, shredded paper, water, coloured water, soapy water, coloured ice cubes, shaving cream, snow, water beads, aquarium stones  
Use of natural materials: leaves, sticks, stones, small gourds, chestnuts, acorns, pinecones, flower petals, sea shells  
Other interesting items to add: beads, buttons, dollar store gemstones, artificial flowers/fruit/vegetables, ribbons, pom poms, small wooden blocks, foam shapes, magnetic letters, cotton balls, fabric scraps, magnetic letters
- toys/materials to fill your bin with e.g. smaller toys kids already have
- tools and instruments to provide with your sensory bin e.g Tweezers, tongs, small spoons, scoops, magnifying glass, small bowls, measuring cups, basters, syringes, ice cube trays, muffin tins, baby food jars
- If it is only a messy play or messy play with food bin e.g. if your child tends to put things in their mouth, you want to consider a taste safe bin or if your child is aversive to food and a restricted eater, you want to offer a messy play with food bin. The aim is for

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them to have fun with food, without the anxiety that they need to put it to their mouth and eat it.

Sensory bin ideas:



Teeny-Tiny, Small World  
**OCEAN PLAY**



*Fabulous*  
**Fall**  
sensory  
bin



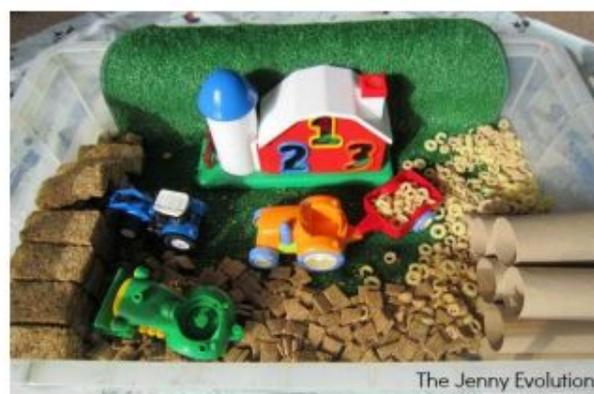
The Jenny Evolution

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Some messy play with food bins:

[https://mommyevolution.com/15-fun-food-sensory-bin-ideas/#\\_a5y\\_p=4113395](https://mommyevolution.com/15-fun-food-sensory-bin-ideas/#_a5y_p=4113395)



More sensory bin ideas:

<https://twinmomrefreshed.com/category/toddler/sensory-activities/>