edu tribe

Sensory

TOOL KIT

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This practical and inspiring resource is designed to help adults plan and implement a wide variety of sensory experiences, tailored to meet the unique needs, interests, and developmental stages of all children.

Whether supporting sensory regulation, encouraging communication, or fostering creativity and curiosity, this guide offers ready-to-use ideas across all sensory domains.

With adaptable suggestions, inclusive strategies, and clear links to the EYLF and NQS, this resource empowers adults to create meaningful, engaging, and responsive sensory opportunities that promote wellbeing, inclusion, and a love of learning in every child.

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Sensory play in early childhood education and care settings engages more than just touch. This toolkit aims to help you implement a variety of experiences targeted to all the different senses. The following areas can be found within this toolkit:

- Tactile (touch)
- Auditory (listening)
- Visual (sight)
- Olfactory (smell)
- Gustatory (taste)
- Vestibular (movement & balance)
- Proprioceptive (body awareness)

Benefits of sensory play:

Sensory play provides children with opportunities to explore touch, sight, smell, sound, movement, and body awareness. Through these experiences, children notice changes in their bodies and feelings when interacting with different materials. Over time, they learn strategies to self-regulate, focus attention, or re-energise, supporting emotional regulation.

Australian professional guidance (see sources) recognises that sensory play as an important part of supporting children's wellbeing and learning. The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF V2.0) highlights that wellbeing is central to learning and that children develop self-regulation through everyday experiences, supported by responsive adults. The ACECQA guides also emphasise that educators play a vital role in helping children manage emotions and behaviour while engaging in rich learning experiences.

In practice, sensory play links strong to the National Quality Standard (NQS). It reflects Quality Area 1 through intentional planning of experiences, Quality Area 2 by supporting the children's wellbeing and safety, Quality Area 3 by offering a sensory rich environment, and Quality Area 5 through educator-child relationships and co-regulation.

These practices sit under the National Quality Framework and align with the Education and Care Services National law and Regulations. By planning, supervising and reflecting on sensory play, educators are supporting children's emotional development in ways that meet both regulatory requirements and best practice guidance.

While sensory play is not explicitly mentioned in the NQS, it aligns with principles that support learning through play, physical and cognitive development, inclusive practice, and responsive environments. Activities in this toolkit highlight links to the EYLF and NQS to guide adults in planning, supervising, and reflecting on experiences that support children's emotional development.

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The sensory experiences in this toolkit are designed to be flexible and adaptable, allowing adults to tailor activities to the unique needs of their children, the physical environment, and the resources they have available. Materials and steps can be adjusted to suit different spaces, group sizes, and developmental levels, ensuring that every child can fully engage with the experiences.

Where possible, adults are encouraged to source materials sustainably. This can include using natural, recycled, or repurposed items, or accessing specialist resource centres such as Remida Perth (WA), Reverse Garbage (NSW), Reverse Art Truck (VIC), and Urban Up-cycle (VIC). These organisations collect and share clean, safe industry offcuts and materials that can be used for play and learning, reducing waste and support environmentally responsible practice.

This toolkit offers a collection of hands-on sensory experiences that can be adjusted to meet the needs of all learners. Each activity includes clear links to the National Quality Standards, supporting adults to provide rich, inclusive, and sustainable sensory play that nurtures curiosity, wellbeing, and a love of learning.

Most importantly this sensory toolkit is fun for children, educators and families!

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Marbled oobleck

Resources:
2 cups of corn flour
2 cups of water
Food colouring or paint

Instructions:

Mix the ingredients together and pour into a large tray such as a tuff tray, making sure to spread it out to cover the entire surface.

Invite the children over to squeeze food colouring or paint over the top, before encouraging them to use their fingers to swirl it in.

Notes:

If you have children who are hesitant to use their fingers, you can also use pop sticks or sticks to swirl the colours in.

Links to NQS and EYLF:

NQS – Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice.

Oobleck provides an open-ended, play-based experience that supports exploration, problem-solving, and inquiry.

EYLF – Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.

Manipulating oobleck supports fine motor strength, coordination, and sensory regulation.

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