

Sand and Substance Play



"Children need the time and freedom to discover the properties of the materials they are working with".

(Jo Graham) 11

Small World Sand Play

Using Small World equipment in the sand gives it a new lease of life. We took a small amount of dry sand and put it on the tough spot with the road building vehicles. The children used it differently to when we just put the vehicles in the sand tray.

Sand & Glitter: shimmer, skitter!

Blowing Bubbles

Use very, very wet sloppy sand with fairy liquid and then add straws! It makes interesting bubble patterns and little piles of sand like worm casts on a beach.

Sand Trail

Sand can be sprinkled outside to make a trail, a maze or even large-scale pictures.

Sand Dance

Walking bare-foot on sand is one of my favourite feelings. Dancing is even better!

Textured Rollers

We couldn't afford textured rolling pins and so we got our ordinary ones and wrapped knotted and plaited string around them; stuck and tied on sticks, bark and leaves. They were very popular and next time we went outside we made some journey rolling pins as opposed to journey sticks.

"What is creativity? In a nutshell it is the ability to use your knowledge and skills as well as your imagination to tackle and solve problems."

(Judith Harries) 11

"A child's play shapes what the material can offer as much as the material predicts what the child can experience".

(K. Gentle) 11

Total Experience

Some of our children just love getting into messy play – so we decided to give them the opportunity to go bare foot in it. We put compost and water on a tough spot and modelled mixing it with out feet! The descriptive language was phenomenal and they still talk about it now, 6 months on! They always ask to do it again. We did make sure we had soapy water, towels and a staff member on hand to help clean their feet.





Role Play Ideas:

- · Large scale beach
- Stony beach
- Builder's yard
- Desert Island
- Lunar surface
- Sea bed



Decision Wheel

There are endless possibilities for substance play. We wanted a way to keep our ideas fresh. Choosing the titles of resources, additives, condition, containers, equipment and location, we can make new ideas all the time. This creates all sorts of combinations, but also if we want to ensure a particular aspect of the learning intention, we can start the wheel at that point. For example we wanted to develop fine motor skills, so we started with whisks, screw-top bottles and sieves in the tray with mashed potato and then built the other options around it.

6. Location:

Outside, inside, part of role play, in small groups, floor, table (sitting/standing) adjacent to a sister activity (e.g. sand, paint and combs in sand-tray next to using sandy paints at table)

5. Equipment:

Buckets, spades, sieves, tea strainers, colanders, moulds, cooking utensils, spoons, whisks, graters etc...,

cake icing bags, straws, crockery, scales, cutlery, combs, marbles, balls, brushes (all types, wet or dry).

Small world play: people, building, vehicles, animals, plants, road and rail track, construction materials, Lego, stickle bricks etc...,

card, glue, scissors etc...,

fabric (differing types), wooden blocks, bags, boxes, bottles, gloves (especially rubber), stationery, story characters, number and letter shapes, cutters, punches, tubes, guttering, insects, hands and feet on their own!

1. Resources:

Sand, flour, cornflower, pulses, pasta, cooked pasta, sugar, sugar cubes, salt, rock salt, breakfast cereal, seeds, grain, jelly, icing sugar, rice, mashed potato, sawdust, wood shavings, gravel, stones, compost, leaves, snow, straw, hay, grass clippings, clay, dried clay (broken-up), playdough,

plasticine, bread-dough, salt dough, soap flakes, papier mâché, Plaster of Paris, bark chippings, shells.

2. Additives

Milk, ice, washing-up liquid, spices, water, paint, glue, glitter, sequins, cooking oil. Another basic resource (e.g. sand and sawdust). All the additives can be in different states e.g. wallpaper glue, thicker or thinner paint etc...

3. Condition

Hot, cold, mixed, layered, in pots to be mixed by children

4. Container:

Sand tray, tough spot, tea tray, individual washing-up bowls, water trough, jelly moulds, mixing bowls, crockery, on grass (no container), plastic sheeting, concrete/hard standing etc...

Sandy Icing

Try wet sand with cake icing bags and nozzles.

Messy Mix

Mix sand and non-toxic wallpaper paste to make a gloopy modelling cement.

Changes, Changes

Sand and ice is really fascinating for the children. The changing quality of the ice changes the sand during the session.

A Sense of Confusion

Try ginger in your compost. It really confuses them!

Playdough Production

We always make our playdough with the children. They love it when it's warm and especially if we add scent to it!

"Children should be given encouragement to explore and try out new ideas to help them learn from their mistakes".

(Dawn Rogers) 11