

# Sensory play

Written by  
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Making rainbow rice, a jelly swamp and multi-coloured liquid shakers are all enjoyable ways for children to explore their senses! These ideas provide sensory stimulation for children with special educational needs, with a mix of bright colours and interesting textures.

## Sensory shakers

### You need:

- Small plastic bottles with lids
- A measuring jug
- Water
- Hair gel
- Food colouring
- Glitter, small toys, buttons, plastic straws, beads

Mixing water with hair gel makes a thicker mixture inside bottles for small objects to float in. Tubs of cheap gel in bright colours are perfect for making this activity!

1. Mix some water and hair gel in a jug. The consistency needs to be runny enough to pour, so

try half and half to start with. The thickness of the liquid can be adjusted if necessary by adding more water or gel.

2. Pour the liquid into a small plastic bottle with a couple of drops of food colouring. Don't use too much, as the liquid needs to stay fairly clear. Put the lid on the bottle and give it a shake to check the colour.

3. Remove the lid and drop some small, lightweight objects inside the bottle. Try using sequins, glitter, beads or pieces of plastic straws. Heavier objects like marbles, buttons and small toys sink more

quickly, but this will vary depending on the thickness of the liquid.

4. Screw the lid tightly onto the bottle and seal, using tape or glue. Try making more shakers, experimenting with different thicknesses of liquid and colour variations.

**Tip:** Water can be used without gel, but the objects will fall to the bottom of the bottle more quickly.

## Jelly swamp

Mashing up jelly with a fork is a fun and tactile experience for young children! Help them to create a swamp or garden filled with





1. Mix up a green jelly following the instructions on the pack. Leave it to set in a bowl.

2. Mix up a different flavoured jelly in a jug then pour it into small plastic cups to set, filling the cups to about  $\frac{3}{4}$  full. If cups are filled to the top, the jellies may be too tall and wobble over.

3. When the green jelly has set, tip it out onto a big plate and let the children mash it up to make the swamp or grass.

4. Tip the small jellies out onto another plate.

5. Spoon the mashed green jelly around the small jellies and decorate with small pieces of chopped fruit for the faces. Watch them wobble when you move the plate!



**SAFETY FIRST**

Always ensure that activities are appropriate for each child's age and stage of development, and are supervised by an adult

**Tip:** Using ready-made, bought jellies for the monsters makes this activity simpler.

yummy, wobbly creatures. Making faces from chopped fruit adds a healthy touch.

**You need:**

- Packets of different coloured jelly
- A jug
- Small plastic cups
- 2 plates
- A fork
- A large spoon
- Grapes, raisins, apples or other fruit to decorate



Turn the page to find out how to make rainbow rice.

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## Rainbow rice

This is an exciting and colourful alternative to playing with sand. Children will love squeezing the bags to rub in the colours! Once the rice has fully dried, it is tactile and clean to play with, making it ideal as an indoor or outdoor activity. (Zip-lock bags are essential!)

### You need:

- White rice – about 1kg per colour
- Food colouring
- Clear hand-wash liquid
- Zip-lock freezer bags
- Trays or mixing bowls
- A large spoon
- A large plastic container or storage box

1. Tip 1kg of rice into a zip-lock bag. Add about 6 drops of food colouring and 3 or 4 squeezes of hand-wash liquid to help distribute the colour.

2. Zip the bag shut. Squeeze and rub the rice inside the bag until it is completely covered with the colouring.

3. If the rice looks too pale, use a few more drops of colouring and rub it in.

4. Open the bag and tip the rice into a mixing bowl or onto a tray. Leave to dry for about 30 minutes then stir with a large spoon and leave for another 30 minutes to dry out thoroughly.

5. Repeat this process with 4 or 5 different colours to make rainbow rice. Tip all the dried rice into a big plastic storage container ready to play with!

**Tips:** Economy white rice is perfect for this activity and can be bought in large bags from supermarkets.

Paste food colours work well for making brighter rice. Use a teaspoon to mix a small amount of paste with hand-wash liquid inside the bag then add the rice and mix everything together. ■

