

Sensory Play for Babies

Babies learn by touching, picking up and dropping, looking, banging, sucking, licking and smelling. Babies use all their senses to learn about weight, size, shape, texture, sound and smell.

You can encourage your child to actively use all their senses by introducing a Treasure Basket.

What is a Treasure Basket?

A treasure basket is a low sided basket filled with natural or everyday items which your baby or young child can explore once they are able to sit on the floor unaided. It will offer a rich play experience for your child, stimulate their curiosity, encourage their concentration as well as develop their hand and eye co-ordination.

The treasure basket will give your baby the opportunity to explore and experiment and make choices at their own pace. Your child will be able to choose which item they wish to play with and then decide how they want to play with it.

By giving your baby the opportunity to explore these different types of objects, from the real world, you can help to aid their development. Your baby will be able to enjoy the treasure basket until they are mobile or walking, and many young children continue to enjoy this activity for a long time afterwards.



You may have some questions about the treasure basket such as:

- **How do I create a treasure basket at home?**
- **What do I put in a treasure basket?**
- **What do I do when my child is playing with the treasure basket?**

Please turn over to find out how you can provide your child with a treasure basket 

Let's get started!

A low basket is ideal as it allows the baby to see and explore the contents easily from a sitting position. Remember, ideally a treasure basket should contain natural objects or items made from natural materials, no plastic items. The basket should contain a variety of objects of different shapes and sizes and textures which the baby will be able to explore.

It is a good idea to change the contents of the basket from time to time to keep your baby stimulated and stop them from becoming bored. By changing the items in the basket you will be giving your baby different sensory opportunities. Here are some ideas of items to put in your treasure basket. Make sure you have a range of items from the different categories. You will not need all the items listed just a small selection at first. You will probably find lots of other things to add to your basket from around the home.

Wooden

- Clothes pegs
- Cubes
- Large curtain rings
- Small bowl
- Egg cup
- Spoons and spatulas



Metal

- Spoons of different sizes
- Small Egg Whisk
- Bunch of Keys
- Tea Strainer
- Triangle
- Chains
- Bike Bell

Paper and cardboard

- Small cardboard boxes
- Kitchen paper roll tubes
- Greaseproof paper

How to create a treasure basket

Leather, textiles and rubber

- Leather purse
- Bouncy ball
- Tennis ball
- Small leather bag with zip
- Length of rubber tubing
- Different fabrics
- Small teddy bear

Natural

- Fir cones
- Large pebbles
- Shells
- Large chestnuts
- Large corks
- Small natural sponge
- Piece of loofah
- A lemon

Made of natural materials

- Woollen ball
- Wooden nail brush
- Shaving brush
- Little baskets
- Small raffia mat
- Cosmetic brush

Enjoy watching your child exploring the treasure basket!

What do you need to do?

You should make sure that the basket is in an area free from distractions. Place the baby (sitting up) next to the basket so that they can easily reach it. Support your baby with a cushion if necessary. Stay quiet and watch your baby as they explore the objects. Try not to help or make suggestions but allow your baby to explore the basket independently. Always supervise your baby and NEVER leave them alone with the treasure basket.

The treasure basket is a safe activity but if you feel unsure about using some of the items try them out for yourself. Feel the edges and make sure they are not sharp. Check whether the item may disintegrate when pulled. Check the items regularly to make sure none of them are broken and they are all safe to use.