

# 55 Easy Items to Include in a Sensory Table at Home or School

Our senses are how we experience the world around us. These experiences are crucial to kids understanding the stimuli in their surroundings. The term “sensory” means that one or more of the five senses is engaged in an experience through seeing, hearing, tasting, touching and/or smelling. Sensory tables work to engage these senses. As human beings, these five different tracks of information come into our brains and together these senses create our own individual experiences. Children (and adults!) learn best and retain the most information when their senses are engaged. This is why sensory tables might be the perfect way to let children exercise their senses and develop their skills. They provide children the opportunity to investigate tactilely-stimulating materials with no preconceived knowledge. In this exploration, children are developing cognitive, social/emotional, physical, communicative and of course, sensory skills. While there is no wrong way to make a sensory table, here are some suggestions to make yours optimal for the sensory interests of your child:

## Bin Base:

Here are 21 different tactile items that you can place in bins for children to play with:

1. Rice & Quinoa
2. Beans
3. Noodles
4. Bird Seed
5. Sand
6. Shredded Paper (gift wrap section)
7. [Insta-Snow Powder](#)
8. Popcorn Kernels
9. Fall (dry) Leaves
10. Marbles & Pebbles
11. Feathers
12. Jelly Beans
13. [Orbeez](#)
14. Beads & Buttons
15. Artificial/Plastic Grass
16. Cotton Balls
17. Coffee Grounds
18. Cereal
19. Epsom Salt
20. [Kinetic Sand](#)
21. Oats

## Tactile Objects:

1. [Fisher-Price Little People](#): These fun little characters are easy to bury and fun to find!
2. [Magnetic Letters/Numbers](#): Caregivers can ask kids to find specific letters or numbers to provide an incentive to dig and encourage prolonged play.
3. **Puzzle Pieces**: Are you missing pieces to complete a puzzle? Perfect. Add them to a sensory bin.
4. [Bath Toys](#): Squirt toys, duckies and more are perfect for kids to explore.
5. **Plastic Bugs**: Ah! There’s a bug in the bin. Kids delight in these creepy crawlies, so let them discover them in a sensory bin!

6. **Rubber Snakes:** Surprise kids by burying a snake deep down in the bin for them to screech when they find him hidden.
7. **Legos/Duplo/Construction Toys:** Tired of stepping on these toys? Add them to the bin.
8. **Paper & Binder Clips:** These are magnetic too, so kids can use a horseshoe magnet to pick them up from the bin.
9. **BINGO Chips:** Kids will really work their fine motor skills to pick these out of the sensory tubs.
10. **Fidget Toys:** Check out this [article on 18 fidgets](#). You can definitely make them part of a sensory table.
11. **Jingle Bells:** As kids run their hands and fingers through the bin, they may hear a little jingle to help them find this little silver object.
12. **Cars & Trains:** Thomas and Hot Wheels a go-go. Add these to the mix.
13. **Erasers:** Differently shaped erasers are a fun texture to uncover. Your local dollar store is always a great place to find little trinkets and treasures.
14. **Pine Cones:** These might be right in your backyard waiting to be added to the sensory bin.
15. **Plastic Eggs:** Fill these with other objects for kids to shake, open and dump out into the mix.
16. **Wooden Blocks:** Kids have loved these for as long as we can remember, and they will love digging them up.
17. **Seashells:** If you live by the sea, these are easy to find additions.
18. **Game Pieces:** Monopoly, Checkers, Trouble, Chess, Dice, etc. Almost all games have pieces, and all are ideal to use for tactile discrimination and sensory exploration.
19. **Pretend Play Food:** These familiar items will be a fun discovery as children pull loaves of bread or plastic pieces of fruit from a sandy bin.
20. **Packing Peanuts:** Squeaky and squeezable, the peanuts are a treat for the senses.
21. **Cookie Cutters:** These outlines come in all sorts of fun shapes and will let the bin base flow through the cookie cutter outline.

## Olfactory Ideas:

1. Rose Petals
2. Dried Herbs—Rosemary, Thyme, Sage, Mint
3. Cinnamon
4. [Natural Extracts](#)—Lemon, Orange, Vanilla
5. Cinnamon Sticks

## Bin Tools:

1. **Tweezers:** [Learning Resources](#) has a Fine Motor Tool set perfect for precision digging in sensory bins!
2. **Pretend Play Garden Toys:** Watering can, shovels, pots and maybe even gloves. Some kids might appreciate wearing gloves during their initial exploration.
3. **Bath Toys:** These toys aren't just for the tub!
4. **Kitchen Utensils:** Ice cream scoop, ladle, spatula, etc. Kids will delight in using these utensils away from the dinner table.
5. **Paint Brushes:** Perfect to let kids dust off the objects in the bin like a paleontologist! Or good for kids that aren't quite sure about the different textures.
6. **Cups:** All sizes work for picking up and pouring back into the sensory bins.
7. **Chopsticks:** Give these to kids that need more of a challenge!
8. **Horseshoe Magnet:** The U shape of these magnets make them ideal to be grasped by fingers and hands, and it can be used to find any magnetic metal incorporated into the table.

Sensory tables, bins, boxes and bags are all resourceful ways to provide kids with a variety of sensations through tactile, visual, olfactory and even auditory stimulation and exploration. You can put things that are hot, cold, smooth, wet, sticky...all within an arm's reach.

These tables are great for kids who already crave sensory stimulation and as a training ground to expose kids to new and unfamiliar sensations in a familiar environment.

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