

## December Sensory Bags and Art

December brings a lot of new activities, traditions and can be very busy for families. Our children are trying to understand these new experiences – there is a tree *INSIDE* my house, *but I can't touch it*. Sparkling lights are on the tree *INSIDE* of my house, *but I can't touch them*. Giving our children things they can touch and time to explore can support when you have to say 'no touch' because something is breakable.



### Materials Needed:

- **Clear, empty gallon size Ziploc bags** – freezer bags are thicker plastic and 'tougher.'
- **Duct tape** – you want to make sure the bags are sealed and secured. There are fun styles, so feel free to add some fun to the edges.
- **Dollar Tree goodies!** – hair gel (the big bottle), misc items representing the season or weather you want to create. Glitter, confetti, pompoms, snowflakes, food coloring, paints, etc. Let your imagination go wild! **We have made felt Christmas trees, Gingerbread Men/Women, Snowmen, and put items to slide over on top.**
- **Scissors** – for cutting tape, making items smaller if need be, etc.
- **Don't overcrowd the bag** – this is an opportunity for exploration, using language, fine motor and sometimes less is more.



**How to:** It may be easier to add the hair gel first and then add the items to the bag to move them around and scatter materials around. When the bag has everything added, close it and then use duct tape to cover the opening to prevent little hands from trying to open it.



One of my favorite things to do is put the bags on a window/sliding glass door to be interactive all day, and the light hits it differently throughout the day. Some children do better standing up to explore – using their fingers to push the pom poms, snowflakes, items to decorate a tree. These bags also give you a chance to have something safe for them to touch when many things are out for decoration.

**Remember** – *when we model, and they imitate, that is the beginning of understanding communication. When we imitate them, we tell them their ideas and choices are powerful, encouraging them to want to do more.*

**Again – use your imagination, plan for what works best for your family and child and HAVE FUN!**

Examples of how to set up for this activity: [Squishy Sensory Bags - Life as Mama Bear](#)

Lesson Plan developed by AnnMarie Adams, Special Education Teacher  
Link and photo credit: Life as a Mama Bear Blog and Happytoddlerplaytime.com

Finger painting with instant pudding is a safe and fun way to get a sensory experience and know that when fingers go into their mouths, they are safe and tasting something new! You can put the pudding and milk in a gallon zip loc bag and have your child shake, smooch and pat the bag to mix it up before you use it.

**As with all activities** – *planning is critical, and adult supervision is needed.*



**Materials Needed:** Fingerpainting with instant pudding

- **Jell-O- instant pudding** – choose your favorite flavor or choose a color or texture you want to explore and use for the final art piece (gingerbread man, tree, snowman, ornament).
- **Food coloring and or spices** – If you want to make an ornament and have two different colors, add a few drops of food coloring to the pudding. You can also add spices to the pudding, like cinnamon, nutmeg, vanilla, etc.
- **Decorations** – after your pudding has dried and you have it cut out, you can add all of the fun details – a Christmas tree or ornament can have small bows, pom poms, glitter, a Gingerbread character can have buttons, bows, eyes, hair, etc.
- **Scissors, paper, tape, sharpie pen** – You will want to use card stock for this activity as it can stand getting 'wet' from the pudding. Tape the paper securely to the surface (highchair tray, table, easel). After the pudding has dried (about 24 hours), you can cut out your desired shape. **I usually draw the shape on the back of the paper first to cut out quickly after it dries.**

**How to:** If you choose to have your child help mix the pudding, you can do it in a bowl or use the zip loc bag. Seal the bag well and let them stand up to shake; use a table or floor to push and squish to mix the pudding.



**After your pudding is mixed, prep your surface for painting.** I recommend you tape the card stock to the surface so your child can cover the entire paper. If you use two colors, let your child mix the colors (another excellent opportunity for language development and gaining knowledge through play).

**Give your child time to explore, play, lick, and taste.** They are going to be curious, maybe cautious at first—model, touch, taste. Having your child imitate what you are doing is the beginning of conversations. You do (speak), they do (speak). If they initiate, you imitate them – WOW, what POWER!

Pudding can take a while to dry, depending on how thick it is. Have a place where it can lay flat to dry overnight if needed.

Once your painting is dry, cut out the shape you wanted (or leave it as is and let your child decorate on top of it).

Use different items to decorate with – you can control the glue bottle, use a small bowl and paintbrush, and practice eye-hand coordination. Add wrapping bows, pom poms, ribbon, buttons – whatever you have on hand, or you are inspired to do.



**This activity encourages** language development by giving you opportunities to use descriptive language, action words, and silly sounds. This activity encourages eye/hand coordination, heavy work with pushing, and fine motor development with using fingers to create. When you have your child decorate the cut-out item(s), you support your child in seeing their work! That supports self-confidence as it is displayed for all to see and enjoy. This activity supports your child's initiating and engagement skills as they can invite you to interact with them, mimicking each other with actions and sounds while expanding their ability to stay engaged in an activity for a more extended period.

**Remember** – *when we model, and they imitate, that is the beginning of understanding communication. When we imitate them, we tell them their ideas and choices are powerful, encouraging them to want to do more.*

**Again – use your imagination, plan for what works best for your family and child and HAVE FUN!**

Examples of how to set up for this activity: [Having Fun at Home: Chocolate Pudding Finger Painting](#)

Lesson Plan developed by AnnMarie Adams, Special Education Teacher  
Link and photo credit: [Havingfunathome.com](#), [houseofburkeblog.com](#)