

## Sensory - Hot Cocoa Sensory Bin (edible)

A few things are always a guarantee with toddlers – they want to explore new things, and everything goes into their mouths to help them remember the items.

*Sensory exploring is important play* – learning how items feel, how they can work together, cause and effect, sounds when you scoop and dump them. Creating opportunities where your child can explore safely – putting the items in their mouth – can take some of the anxiety away from us as they explore and learn.



### **Materials Needed:** Hot Cocoa Sensory Bin (edible)

- **Tote, bowl, pan** – You will need a container for this activity to hold all the items. Because these items will be touched and mouthed, you will want to throw the food items away and wash all your play items (tools) when done.
- **Hot Cocoa 'food' items** – chocolate cereal (your choice), mini marshmallows, spoons, small cups, measuring cups/spoons, whisks, and cups with lids. You could even add some whipped cream (from the can is always impressive) which you put on top of the "cup of cocoa," add some fun sprinkles (sprinkles can be different shapes and colors). You could also make a chocolate cloud dough – *recipe at the bottom of this lesson*.
- **Let your imagination go wild!**

**How to:** *Set up your bin in a location where your child can easily access it and keep it available for a while* – sometimes, it can take a child a few minutes to figure out what is happening. They may need some modeling and time to get comfortable with what is happening. When we put time and effort into a project like a sensory bin and our children don't explore right away, it can feel defeating.

*Give it time* – have other toys out so that your child can go to play something familiar.

*Sit with the bin*, model, make silly sounds or actions to bend their curiosity.

*Pop a marshmallow in your mouth* – watch how fast they come to see what you just did! Did you just put something in your mouth that we GET TO PLAY WITH?!

*Add a squirt of whip cream to your fingertip and lick it off!*

**Developmentally this activity encourages** language development by giving you opportunities to use descriptive language, action words, and silly sounds. Eye/hand coordination and fine motor development are also encouraged with picking up the small food items, looking at them, smelling them, exploring them.

Having your child see your playing and exploring will try to imitate you, and then you can imitate them; this supports self-confidence as you show your child that you believe they are someone to follow.

Our goal is to have our children initiate engagement with us. Learning that 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. Expanding on the length of engagement allows for more time to explore, play, and **play is how children learn**. Being silly, doing something unexpected, new can be exciting and encourage exploration.

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

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

The link below has examples of how to set up for this activity:

[The BEST 40 Sensory Bins For Kids - ABCDee Learning](#)

Lesson Plan developed by AnnMarie Adams, Educator

Link and photo credit: [The BEST 40 Sensory Bins For Kids - ABCDee Learning](#)

**You could also make chocolate cloud dough for this activity instead of cereal.**

YIELD: 10 CUPS CLOUD DOUGH

HOT CHOCOLATE CLOUD DOUGH

[Hot Chocolate Cloud Dough \\* Sugar, Spice and Glitter \(sugarspiceandglitter.com\)](#)

3-ingredient Hot Chocolate Cloud Dough, a winter sensory play experience that your children will love.

### MATERIALS

- 8 cups flour
- 2-4 cups hot chocolate mix
- 2 cups oil

### TOOLS

- Measuring cups and spoons
- Mixing spoon
- Large storage container or bowl

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. If you want to make the flour taste-safe, preheat an oven to 350F.
2. Sprinkle the flour on cookie sheets and bake for 5 minutes. Allow it to cool before proceeding with making your cloud dough.
3. Measure out the flour and hot chocolate mix into a large container. Add enough hot chocolate mix to get the color and scent that you'd like - we added a lot because we had a giant container of hot chocolate, but less would have still sufficed.
4. Start with adding just 1 1/2 cup of oil to the dry mixture, fully incorporate it using your hands or a wooden spoon. You want the dough to seem dry to the touch and stick together if you grab a handful. Add extra in 1/2 cup increments until you reach the desired texture.
5. The cloud dough should be soft and powdery, not wet, and hold a shape when squished.

