

**Play is our children's work** – it is how they learn how things work by throwing balls, scooping dirt, going down a slide (physics), it is how they learn how to calculate how far to kick a ball, how big to make that sandcastle, how heavy the bucket it is to carry (math) and how to get messy, explore and experience the world around them.

Our children do not come with the ability to jump in and play. **We need to teach them by modeling**, allowing exploration, allowing opportunities to experience the world around them, and being with them. At the same time, they make connections between their own life and the physical world.

Remember – **We model fun to our children. Play with them and bring your best silly self. They will respond and want more.**

### Outside Art **Painting with Rain!**

**Materials Needed:** washable paints (watercolor, finger paint, tempera paint), paintbrushes, paper (newsprint construction, poster, printer, roll of paper wrapping paper), tape, wash clothes/towels for clean-up.

**How to:** This is a great activity to do with the rains we experience here. You can tape the paper to the ground, table, or fence and let your child experience the idea of painting. Model for them, mimic them in what they are doing, narrate what they are doing, and narrate what you are doing (circle-circle, dot-dot-dot, up and down, up and down).

Your child will probably start slow if this is their first experience.

- Give them the space and time to come and go.
- You can have another activity on the side that they are familiar with to come and go between both. Be patient when introducing new ideas and activities – it can take a bit of time to become comfortable.

When the weather changes and begins to rain, you can go outside and look at your creation. What is happening to the paint? How is that happening? If we don't get rain for some fantastic miracle, take a squirt bottle and get the dry paint to see what happens.

**Developmentally this activity encourages** many areas of growth. Fine motor with eye-hand coordination, mixing colors, figuring out how to use a paintbrush to get paint onto paper, dipping in water and then paint (watercolors), the feel and squish between your fingers with finger paint. If you tape the paper to a fence, your child can stand, move quickly, and see eye to eye with their creation. Language can be explored by labeling the actions (circles, dots, up/down). Use purposeful language that you can use throughout your day (let's put on your shoes, put that truck down here). Once the rain hits the paper and changes the art, you can add new words and science when you experience the rain together.

### Recipe for homemade fingerpaint:

½ cup cornstarch    1 cup water    ½ tsp salt    3 TBSP sugar    Food coloring

Mix all ingredients into a small saucepan. Heat on low to medium heat, stirring occasionally. Once the mixture thickens (about 10 minutes), remove it from the heat. It will look like the consistency of pudding. Divide into small portions to color. Store in airtight containers in the fridge.

Lesson Plan created by AnnMarie Adams, Special Education teacher, HRC.

Photos and links for Outside Art are provided by:

[Kids art:: painting with the rain - NurtureStore](#)



### Outside – Sensory Play

#### Sensory Walk!

This activity can be done in various ways, done multiple times, and you can use different sensory materials to change it every time. It does take some planning and prep. You know your child best, so plan to keep the first experience simple, easy, and manageable for yourself.

**Materials Needed:** Shallow containers to put items in and strong enough to handle a child and parent stepping in them. Items for each container to step on. Some items may include dirt, water, flour, sand, bark, cotton balls, Jell-o, shaving cream – NOT MENTHOL, smooth river rocks, bubbles. You will want towels to wipe you're your hands and feet.

Keep it simple to begin with – maybe start with three containers that you know your child would be interested in exploring. My daughter, just 24 months, could not get enough of getting wet, getting messy, exploring. I had to find the activities to keep her exploring and learning. She was moving faster than I could keep up some days. Those moments go by so fast – but make memories for me that I cherish every day.

**Keep the space you have to play in mind** – smaller spaces will have fewer items, so there is room for play and exploration.

Remembering what you, as the caregiver, can handle is essential. **Have towels and baby wipes available** if touching new things or textures is not a favorite thing.

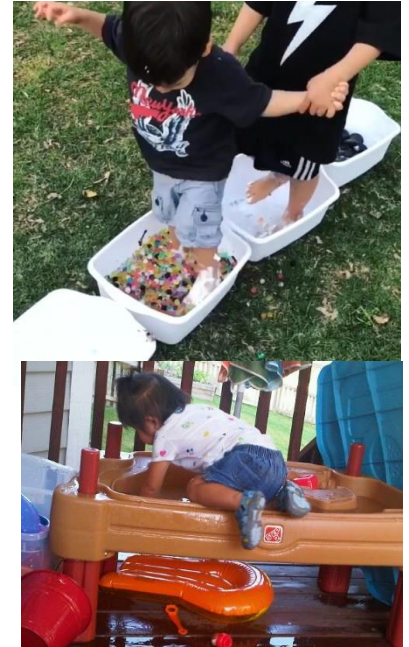
**How to:** Fill your bins with the materials you want your child to explore; you can model how to begin if they are hesitant. Be silly, have fun. Use sounds to 'describe' what you are feeling 'squish' 'tip toe,' 'poke.' If your child is hesitant, go to something else for a few minutes – chalk, play chase, listen to the birds, cars, planes. Then go back to the bins and touch with your fingers instead of your feet.

**Developmentally this activity encourages:** This activity encourages fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination, heavy work – the stomping, jumping, tie toes, squishing and many opportunities for language development – labeling, using functional words like in and out, allowing exploring through play to practice real-life skills like wiping their feet, picking up and helping to clean up. Socially and emotionally, this activity gives your child a chance to explore and discover with you close by to support, encourage, and model. Being silly, laughing, and sharing the BIG FUN supports learning by tying the activity to an emotion, which helps to cement long-term skills and muscle memory. *We don't have to rush this activity. Be with your child, meet them right where they are, and support them as they discover new things.*

Lesson Plan created by AnnMarie Adams, Special Education teacher, HRC.

Photos AnnMarie Adams (daughter 24 months old) Photos and links for Outside Physical provided by:

[Sensory Walk \\* ages 1+ \\* Raising Dragons](#)



### Outside – Big Muscle

#### Painting Outside with water

**Materials Needed:** Clean (new) paintbrushes, rollers, buckets, or clean paint pans (or liners), water, towels to dry off. Extra pitchers of water are handy for when the water gets dumped – *because it will.*

**SAFETY** – Please use new clean materials for this activity. Young children are naturally trying to figure out what something is by putting it into their mouths. Remind them it is "for our hands, not mouths."

Re-direct with another action they can do with the materials.

**Keep the space you have to play in mind** – smaller spaces will have fewer items, so there is room for play and exploration. However, a deck of an apartment can work just as well as the side of a house or barn.

Remembering what you, as the caregiver, can handle is essential. **Have towels and baby wipes available** if touching new things or textures is not a favorite thing.

**How to:** Fill up the containers with water, get the brushes ready, and model 'painting.' Your child might be hesitant, so go slow and offer to do it together. Your child might be so ready your child might be hesitant, so go slow and offer to do it together. Your child might be so ready that you cannot pour the water fast enough. You may also find your child is just dumping the water. **Don't quit – get more water.** This is how children figure out water and pouring. *This is their work, and we need to support them in this foundational exploring so they can move on to doing more with water.*

**Developmentally this activity encourages:** This activity encourages fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination, heavy work – brushing and rolling on a surface provides resistance, many opportunities for language development – labeling, using functional words like in and out, allowing exploring through play to practice real-life skills – *dipping the brush in the water, left to right, up and down.* Socially and emotionally, this activity gives your child a chance to explore and discover with you close by to support, encourage, and model. Being silly, laughing, and sharing the BIG FUN supports learning by tying the activity to an emotion, which helps to cement long-term skills and muscle memory.

Lesson Plan created by AnnMarie Adams, Special Education teacher, HRC.

Photos AnnMarie Adams (daughter 34 mo old) Photos and links for Outside Physical provided by:

[Quick Painting the Driveway with Water Activity - Hands On As We Grow®](#)



### Outside – Imaginative Play

Outside play allows us to get messier, explore a little deeper, and be in an ever-changing environment. From the weather we feel and see to the sounds we hear and the smells. Our body is taking it all in. These experiences can be labeled and easily narrated while we play with our children.

### Muddy Animals/Trucks and Wash

**Materials Needed:** Dirt, water, two bins, bowls or pans, play farm animals or trucks, wash clothes and towels.

**SAFETY** – kids are naturally trying to figure out what something is by putting it into their mouths. Remind them it is "for our hands, not mouths."

Re-direct with another action they can do with the materials.

**Keep the space you have to play in mind** – smaller spaces will have fewer items, so there is room for play and exploration. A deck of an apartment works just as well as a backyard. A beach at the park or waterfront at a lake is also a fun place to do this activity.

Remembering what you, as the caregiver, can handle is essential. **Have towels and baby wipes available** if touching new things or textures is not a favorite thing.

**How to:** Start small. Maybe a little dirt and water to make some 'mud' to play in. Get your animals or trucks and put them in the bin. Animals can stop, trucks can 'vroom.' You could build hills with the mud to go up and over – or use the mud to drive and stomp in with the toys. Has the clean water station set up near the 'messy' play so that your child can go and clean their hands, wash the toys and come back? You may find that your child prefers the bubbles in the cleaning station – that is fine. Wash the toys, label the parts (name the trucks/animals, point to their eyes or wheels, use funny sounds when you are playing).

**Developmentally this activity encourages:** This activity encourages fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination, heavy work – scooping, dumping, digging in the sand, many opportunities for language development – labeling, using functional words like in and out, allowing exploring through play to practice real-life skills – *using a spoon is scooping and getting the food to a target*, digging, scooping is a great way to practice the skill, pouring out items from cups, pouring into cups. Socially and emotionally, this activity gives your child a chance to explore and discover with you close by to support, encourage, and model. Being silly, laughing, and sharing the BIG FUN supports learning by tying the activity to an emotion, which helps to cement long-term skills and muscle memory.

Lesson Plan created by AnnMarie Adams, Special Education teacher, HRC.

Photos and links for Outside Imaginative Play provided by:

[Wash the Muddy Farm Animals Sensory Play - The Imagination Tree](#)

