

A few things are always a guarantee with toddlers – they want to explore new things, and everything goes into their mouths to help them make a memory of 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:** Ice, Ice, Ice play!

- **Tote, bowl, pan** – You will need a container for this activity so that it can stay contained.
- **Sensory Medium** – ice! You can freeze items inside individual containers, you can put a block of ice out with items frozen inside, you can just put ice cubes in, you could add ice to a small amount of water.
- **Engagement Items** – shovels, watering can, scoops, funnels, containers, small hammer, wash clothes.
- **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 come to explore right away, it can feel defeating.*

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

*Sit with the bin, model, and make silly sounds or actions to bend their curiosity -watch how fast they come to see what you just did!*

*Do something unexpected!* Did you just pour water into the dirt? Did you bury the flowers under the sand?



**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 with picking up the small items, looking at them, smelling them, and exploring them. Having your child see you playing and exploring, they 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 longer period. Expanding on the length of engagement allows for more time to explore, to play – and **play is how children learn**. Messy is good.

Being silly and doing something unexpected and new can be exciting and encourage exploration.

**Remember** – *when we model, and they mimic, that is the beginning of understanding communication. When we mimic them, we are telling them their ideas and choices are powerful, which can encourage them to want to do more.*

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