How Does It Feel?

Invite your child to feel a few objects and then find them by touch when they are out of sight.

Your child will begin to connect the words you say with the textures he touches.

Does that sandpaper feel scratchy?

You found a smooth ball in the bag!
Why this is important

Your child will enjoy touching objects with different textures. When he learns the words that describe the way an object feels, he will develop a better understanding of that object. Asking him to use his sense of touch to find an object gives him practice with following directions.

What you do

- Place three or four objects of varying textures in a box. A few examples are: a cotton ball, a pinecone, a hairbrush, a ball, sandpaper, and a crayon.

- Encourage your child to open the box and feel the objects.

- Talk about each item as he explores it. *That's a cotton ball. It's very soft.* Always use the same word to describe the same texture. Use more than one object of a particular texture so that your child understands that *soft* is not the name of the object but a word to describe an object.

- Give him plenty of time to explore the objects. Then, place two of the objects in a bag so that your child can no longer see them.

- Ask him to find one of the objects by reaching in to look for it using only his fingers. He may try to use his eyes to find the object. Encourage him to try again with his hands. *Let's see if you can find it with your fingers. Find a ball that's round and smooth.*

- Repeat the game using the same objects until he can intentionally choose the one you ask for.

- Add another object to the bag. If he is having success, work up to three or four items at a time.

Another idea

Ask him to locate an object by only giving him a description of the object, not the name. *Can you find something scratchy? Can you find something hard?*

Let’s read together!

*Dog*
by Matthew Van Fleet and Brian Stanton
Painting With Water

Encourage your child to explore what happens when he rubs a wet sponge on different surfaces.

You will be giving your child a chance to direct his own play and discover that he has the ability to change his environment.

You made a mark with the sponge!
Why this is important

For young children, each new activity provides chances for decision making and creativity. By experimenting with water and sponges, he will begin to notice changes his actions make to the environment. Self-directed play helps your child develop confidence in his ability to make decisions. Holding the sponge and moving his hand and arm in a purposeful way to make marks are good practice for later when he will hold a pencil for writing.

What you do

- Find a place where your child can paint with water and you will not have to worry about the mess. An outside wall or sidewalk work well.

- Fill a bucket, no more than halfway, with water, and find a sponge that your child can easily hold in his hand.

- Show him how to dip the sponge into the water and squeeze before he begins painting.

- Point out the wet surface he creates. You made a line on the wall! Allow him to decide what to paint next.

- Notice how your child begins to control his movements in order to direct the sponge in a specific way. He may try different arm movements to create different strokes with the sponge. He might also become more interested in the sponge and practice dipping it in the bucket and squeezing out the excess water. Let him direct the activity.

Another idea

If your child needs a few suggestions of what to paint on, let him try steps, tree trunks, or rocks. In the house, the kitchen floor is a good surface. You can offer him a paintbrush with a bowl of water and let him paint a few toys and plastic dishes.

Let’s read together!

Olivia
by Ian Falconer
Scribbling

You made a blue circle with your crayon.

Talk to your child about his actions, the marks he makes, and the feelings he shows as he uses a crayon.

Your child will explore the hand and finger control that will help him repeat or vary the marks he makes on the paper.
Why this is important

As your toddler experiments with making simple strokes and scribbles with crayons, he is learning to control his hand and make deliberate marks. As his ability to control the crayon grows, he is able to repeat his marks and change them. Gaining control of hand and finger motions is a necessary step in getting ready for writing. Allowing him to decide how to draw develops creativity and imagination.

What you do

- Sit with your child at a table with crayons and a large piece of paper taped to the table. Invite him to choose a crayon and begin marking the paper. Watch quietly until he finishes, then comment on his work. You made a straight blue line!

- Recreate a line he has drawn using your own piece of paper. You made a red, curvy line. I think I will try to make one like you did.

- Talk about any broad movements he makes with his arm. If he draws a spiral, point out how his arm goes around and around. Imitate his movement as you draw your own spiral.

- Notice your child making smaller, more controlled lines. You put that line just where you wanted it.

- Keep the sessions short, but keep drawing materials handy so that he can return to them frequently.

Ready to move on?

Point out any marks that resemble letters. *This line curves like the letter C.*

Let’s read together!

*Harold and the Purple Crayon*  
by Crockett Johnson
Trying New Motions

Show your child how to walk sideways, backward, or across a low bridge.

Your child’s skill level and confidence will increase as he learns to control his body while moving in challenging ways.
Why this is important

Your toddler is now able to take on several new physical skills. He will learn that he can move his body in new ways. Learning how to coordinate different motions will help him with activities such as riding a tricycle or swinging.

What you do

- Walk a few steps backward while your toddler watches you. Talk about the movement. *I'm walking backward. Would you like to hold my hand and walk backward, too?*
- Try walking sideways together, or crawling on your hands and knees.
- Make a bridge from a wide board and two bricks. Help him stand on one end, then go to the other end and encourage him to walk to you. Hold his hand if needed, and offer positive feedback when he reaches the other end. *You made it to the other side!*

Another idea

Sing songs to offer another way for your child to try new movements. *If you’re happy and you know it turn around.*

Let’s read together!

*If You’re Happy and You Know It, Clap Your Hands!*
by David Carter
Matching Colors

Can you find one like this?

Help your child match two like-colored objects in a group of three.

Hearing you say the names of colors as she selects them helps her to later identify and sort objects by color.

Which sock looks the same as the one on your foot?
Why this is important

Drawing your child’s attention to colors helps her learn the names of each one, match and group items of identical color, and notice the differences between colors. Your child may find it easier to understand and remember an object if she can place it in a category such as color.

What you do

- Draw your child’s attention to the colors of objects as she plays with them. Find three objects with two being the same color. Use the words like and same.

- Show her the three objects. Choose one, show it to her, and ask her to find the other one that is the same color. I have a yellow block. Look at the colors. Can you find one like mine?

- Describe her choice and offer her another try if she chooses the wrong color. That block is red. My block is yellow. Can you find another yellow block?

- Give her time to find the matching item. If she still does not, then place your object next to the correct one. Look at the yellow blocks. They are the same. Stop playing if she appears frustrated.

- Move the objects on the table as you play, so that she has to look in a new spot each time. When she finds the matching object, even accidentally, offer her encouragement. You found the yellow block just like mine!

- Invite her to lead the game and ask you to choose a block. She may vary the game by stacking the blocks or hiding them.

Ready to move on?

Add more blocks, and more colors, to the game once your child can easily choose between two or three colors. Encourage her to group objects by color. Offer her a tray or box to help separate the objects by color.

Let’s read together!

Mouse Paint
by Ellen Stoll Walsh
Using Tools

Encourage your child to use an object as a tool to get an item that is out of reach.

Your child will practice using tools to solve problems.

You’re using the spoon to help you reach the block!
**Why this is important**

When you encourage your child to use objects to reach things, she learns that tools can help her complete tasks she could not otherwise do. When she uses a wooden spoon to move a block closer to her, she learns that an object such as a spoon can be used in more than one way. This understanding helps her think of new ways to solve problems.

**What you do**

- Look for opportunities to offer your child a tool to use to get something that is out of reach. For example, when her ball rolls under a chair and out of her reach, use the opportunity to offer her a tool that can help her get the ball. Give her a ruler to reach with. Be sure to supervise her exploration and give her some help if needed.

- Place a few blocks out of her reach on a table. Place a long wooden spoon on the table and wait to see if she will use the spoon as a tool. Help her by asking, *Can you use the spoon to reach the blocks?*

- Show your child other tools to use such as a low, sturdy stool to help her reach high places. When using the stool, make sure you have removed dangerous items to another room or a very high shelf. **A stool should be used only if you are able to watch and help as your child uses it.**

- Step back and let her discover new uses for household objects. She may surprise you with her ideas!

**Another idea**

Encourage your child to help with household chores so she can see how you use tools around the house. Offer her a wagon to use to collect her toys at clean-up time.

**Let’s read together!**

**Tools**
by Ann Morris
See, Show, Say

Show me a purple lunchbox.

As you read with your child, invite her to look at, point to, and talk about what she sees on the page.

Reading interactively helps your child stay interested in a book and learn.
Why this is important

Young children who pay close attention to and talk about books are more engaged in learning. Engaging your child in the story helps increase her vocabulary and comprehension, which are important early literacy skills.

What you do

- Sit comfortably with your child to establish a loving reading routine. Pay attention to her eyes as you read a familiar book. If she looks at something on the page when you read about it, pause and describe it. *You see that big, red truck.*

- Continue to read her favorite books to her. As long as she is actively looking and listening she will be learning from the experience.

- Invite her to participate during reading. *There is a bicycle. Can you put your finger on the bicycle?* Or, *Which coat is blue? Can you find the blue coat?* Encourage her to repeat a few words such as *blue* or *coat.*

- Ask questions when she feels comfortable with the book. *What is the little boy holding? Where do you think they are going?* Give your child time to talk about the picture before moving on.

- Think of seeing, showing, and saying as three levels of response to a story, each one more challenging than the last. Start a new book with simply asking your child to notice the pictures. On pages where she cannot name objects, invite her to point. If she can say the names of the objects, ask questions so she will answer with words and not actions.

Another idea

Give your child time to ask questions about the book. Answer her questions in ways that extend her involvement with the book. *The fire truck is going to put out the fire. Let’s make the sound of the siren together. Rrr.*

Let’s read together!

*Find the Puppy*  
by Phil Roxbee Cox
Toys Peeking Out

Encourage your child to identify a toy by seeing just one part of it.

This requires your child to notice identifying characteristics and then remember the whole object.

What could this be?

Can you find the doll?
Why this is important

Recognizing part of an object requires your child to remember the whole object. This process is called visual closure. Visual closure is used in many tasks in life, including reading. When she can say the name of the hidden object, she is expressing what she knows using her growing vocabulary.

What you do

- Show your child one familiar toy covered with a towel. Make sure a part of the toy, like the wheel on a truck, can still be seen. Let your child uncover the toy and play with it.

- Make the game harder by partially covering two different objects such as a doll and a toy car. Hide them under the towel and ask your child to find the doll. Do you know where the doll is? Can you find it for me?

- If she does not see the doll, uncover more of it to make it easier to find. Repeat the game until she can easily locate each item.

- Invite your child to use language during the game. As she chooses an object, ask her to name it before she takes it from its hiding place. Can you tell me what you found? If she doesn't know the name of the toy, offer help. You found the doll! Can you say doll?

- Give her time to play with the toy before repeating the game.

Ready to move on?

Add more toys to the game so that she has a few more to choose from. You can also add toys or household items that are less familiar to her and therefore harder to recognize.

Let’s read together!

Hide and Snake
by Keith Baker
Create a Face

And now you’re giving her a nose.

Talk about the parts of a face as your child creates one using different shapes.

Your child’s self-image will strengthen as she learns how to create a likeness of herself.
Why this is important

From their earliest days, tiny babies recognize a circle with two eyes and a mouth as a face. Now your child can practice creating her own representation of a face. Using shapes to represent parts of the face helps her learn the correct places for eyes, mouth, and nose. As she gains experience making a representation of a face, she shows that she understands parts of herself and strengthens her self-image.

What you do

- Cut out a large paper circle and a variety of smaller circles or other shapes, and give them to your child.
- Point to the big circle and say: Let’s make a face together. What will it need to see with? You can suggest some shapes if she needs help.
- Ask what the face needs to eat with. Let her think about what is needed before telling her.
- Offer your child a mirror so she can review the parts of her face. Point out that her eyes are above her mouth and the nose is in the middle.
- Do not change the face your child creates, even if it is incorrect. She will eventually learn where each part belongs.

Another idea

Think of other opportunities to create faces together. You can draw faces with crayons or finger paints. Playing with sand or play dough also offer chances to make simple faces together.

Let’s read together!

The Wide-Mouthed Frog
by Keith Faulkner
Ring around the Rosie!

Invite your child to join in a family game.

Having fun in a group helps your child feel loved and supported by his family.
Why this is important

Your child will learn how to get along in the world as he participates in activities with family or a group of friends. Feeling secure in a warm and loving group helps your child get ready to try new games. As he feels encouraged to participate, he will trust his own abilities to contribute to a group. Group activities help him learn how to interact with and be more confident with adults and his peers.

What you do

- Make time in your day to play games with your child and other family members or friends.
- Play simple group games such as “Ring Around the Rosie” or “Duck, Duck, Goose”. When singing or listening to music, form a band and invite the whole family or group to participate. Give each member a pan and spoon to bang with, or use whistles, bells, or horns.
- Invite each family member to make up a silly dance for the others to try. Hold hands with your child as you dance together. Watch me hop around the circle. Can you hop, too?
- Give your child a chance to invent a game for everyone to play together.
- Use family time as an opportunity to share love and support.

Another idea

Think of other parts of the day that can be spent together as a family. Family activities can include meal times, art projects, travel games, and quiet time reading together.

Let’s read together!

I Like It When
by Mary Murphy