**Flour & oats**

* **Gloop (cornflower mixed with water)**

**Mix an amount of cornflour gradually with water until it binds. Place in a tray or shallow container and try to pick it up! Vary the consistency occasionally and for more exploratory experiences, let the children make it themselves and feel the cornflour dry and mix it up themselves.**

**You also could try exploring:**

* **Dry or cooked spaghetti or pasta**
* **Cold custard**
* **Jelly**
* **Shaving foam**
* **Shredded paper**
* **Rice**
* **Scents such as cinnamon or lemon juice**
* **Food colouring**

**Glitter Children (24 – 36 months)**

Put the gloop at an accessible height and begin to use tools in it – spoons, scrapers, forks. Sand

rakes, funnels. Etc.

The children could make gloop by themselves and experiment with adding colours and scents to

it, using food colouring, paint or perfumed oils. Talk with them as they work, modelling and

encouraging descriptive languages as they pick the gloop up, pour it and watch how it

changes.

**Children (3 to 5)**

Talk with the children as they explore the gloop, using words like solid and liquid and how gloop

appears to be both. Compare gloop with custard powder, cocoa powder and drinking chocolate

when they are mixed with water. Try mixing these with other liquids to see what happens.

Removing drips and drops from surfaces has its own fascination – offer the children scrapers or old credit or loyalty cards for clearing up time, and they will love it!

* **Cornflakes and other cereals**
* Small or large quantities of dry cereals are good for creativity play. Ask parents or your local shop to donate ‘past the sell-by date’ packs or ends of packets to avoid the sensitivity of using food for play. The added benefits of this play are that if children do eat a bit of it they will come to no harm, and the birds can eat the left overs!

**Children (24-36 month)**

Put some small paper or plastic bags and scoops out with the dry cereals and encourage fine

motor skills in pouring and filling the bags.

Hide small world creatures such as bugs and insects in the cereals for the children to find. By this

stage, children will not be so likely to eat play items, so you could add other foods to the mixture –

dried beans, peas, rice, very small pasta shapes, and seeds.

**Children (3 to 5)**

Offer the different cereals (and rice, beans, pasts etc) in separate bowls or containers with

scoops, spoons, plastic sups, ladles, bags and boxes. You could even add a pair of balance

scales (no weights). Don’t suggest what they should play, just see what happens. Inevitably the

different materials will get mixed up during play, so another challenge is to talk about how you

could sort them out!

* **Sensory Porridge Oat Playdough**

**You will need:**

* Water
* Flour
* Food Colouring
* Porridge oats
* Bowl

**Activity:**

To make the playdough pour a few drops of food colouring into a jug of water. Pour some flour into a bowl and gradually stir in the water, if the colour of the flour looks too pale add some more food colouring to the mixture. If the mixture is too dry and does not combine, add some more water, and if it is too wet or sticky add more flour. Kneed the mixture with your hands so that the playdough is fully coloured and no longer sticky, and you have a nice consistency to the dough.

Once the dough has been made kneed the Porridge oats into the dough until you get the desired effect. The children can now play and mould their dough to make their own creations.

**Areas of learning covered:**

* Creative development
* Physical development
* Personal and Social development
* **Cornflour play**

Children of all ages will enjoy this messy activity.

Pour some corn flour into a bowl and mix it with water until it becomes thick, so you can still pour it but feels solid under pressure. Pour the cornflour onto the table and allow the children to explore the texture of the mixture.

Different toys can be added for the children to play with in the cornflour such as megablocks, cars or animals.

A small amount of food colouring or essenses can also be added to the water when mixing the cornflour

* **Flour Play**

This is a simple activity which all children can enjoy participating in, getting messy whilst exploring the texture.

**You will need:**

* Flour

**Activity:**

Pour some flour onto the table or a messy mat on the floor and allow the children to play in it. To make this activity more fun or appealing add toys to the flour, such as cars, mega blocks, tea set or a range of containers.

**Areas of learning covered:**

* Creative development
* Personal and Social development

## Porridge Oat Play

**You will need:**

* Porridge oats
* A range of boxes and containers
* Or tea set
* Or a range of toys

**Activity:**

Pour the bag of porridge oats onto the table or in a tray and allow the children to play with it. Provide the children with a range of objects to play with during their sensory play, such as containers, boxes, pots shovels and sand moulds etc. Children’s favourite toys can also be added to the oats such as mega blocks, cars, tea set, small world toys etc.

This activity can be used with children of all ages as a sensory activity, but also for older children as an early mathematical activity, where they can talk about capacity, volume and weight, and begin to use early mathematical language such as heavy, light, empty and full.

**Areas of learning covered:**

* Personal and Social development
* Language Literacy and Communication skills
* Physical development
* Mathematical development

**Dough**

* **Make Your Own Sparkly Playdough**

This adds a sensory and christmas aspect to a simple activity of playdough that children of all ages can enjoy.

**You will need:**

* Water
* Flour
* Food Colouring
* Glitter
* Bowl

**Activity:**

To make the playdough pour a few drops of food colouring into a jug of water. Pour some flour into a bowl and gradually stir in the water, if the colour of the flour looks too pale add some more food colouring to the mixture. If the mixture is too dry and does not combine, add some more water, and if it is too wet or sticky add more flour. Kneed the mixture with your hands so that the playdough is fully coloured and no longer sticky, and you have a nice consistency to the dough.

Once the dough has been made kneed the glitter into the dough until you get the desired effect. The children can now play and mould their sparkling dough to make their own creations. Close supervision will be needed with younger children to ensure they do not eat any of the playdough.

**Areas of learning covered:**

* Creative development
* Physical development
* Personal and Social development
* **Sensory Rice Playdough**

**You will need:**

* Water
* Flour
* Food Colouring
* Rice
* Bowl

**Activity:**

To make the playdough pour a few drops of food colouring into a jug of water. Pour some flour into a bowl and gradually stir in the water, if the colour of the flour looks too pale add some more food colouring to the mixture. If the mixture is too dry and does not combine, add some more water, and if it is too wet or sticky add more flour. Kneed the mixture with your hands so that the playdough is fully coloured and no longer sticky, and you have a nice consistency to the dough.

Once the dough has been made kneed the rice into the dough until you get the desired effect. The children can now play and mould their dough to make their own creations.

**Areas of learning covered:**

* Creative development
* Physical development
* Personal and Social development
* **Other ideas**

**You could try adding:**

* **Food colouring**
* **Powder paint**
* **Uncooked rice**
* **Food essences e.g. strawberry or mint**
* **Oat meal**
* **Sand**

**Keep in the fridge and change on a regular basis.**

**Remember: Dough harbours bacteria – if in doubt, throw it out!**

**Water**

* **Coloured And Flavoured Water Play**

This is an activity that is suitable and enjoyable for children of all ages.

When filling up the water tray with warm water, add a little food colouring or essence of your choice to the water, this can make a nice change to normal water play and appeals to the child’s other senses.

* **Water Sponge Play**

This is another activity that children of all ages will enjoy.

When playing in the water tray give the children different sizes and shapes of flannels and sponges, so that they can experiment.

To create a different sensory activity, experiment with adding a small amount of food colourings or essenses to the water.

* **Icecube play**
* A fun activity that can be done by all children but may be more suited to older children.
* Place some water into different shaped ice cube trays and place in the freezer. Once they have frozen turn out onto a tray and allow the children to play with the cubes and watch and feel them melt.
* **Paint ice cube pictures**

Very messy, but a fun activity for all children.

Pour some paint into ice cube trays and place in the freezer until frozen. Provide the children with large pieces of paper and turn the paint cubes out into a tray. As the children play with the cubes they will melt, and can be used to make different patterns and pictures.

* **Wet sand play**
* This can be a fun, both messy and sensory activity for children of all ages.
* When playing in the sand tray, pour in a small amount of water, to make all the sand wet. The children can build sand castles, or find hidden objects that you have placed buried in the sand.
* This is a good sensory activity too as this has a different feel to the dry sand children are used to playing in.
* Sand mousse - dry sand with washing up liquid mixed in ( messy but will exfoliate your hands beautifully)
* **Soap Flakes**

Soap flakes are worth looking for – they are not easy to find, but demand is bringing them back! Don’t use detergent instead. Mix some soap flakes with warm water in a bowl or other container. Leave the mixture to stand until it becomes thick, adding more water if it needs it. The mixture will be slimy and slidey. It’s called slime!

**Children (24-36 months)**

Let the children help you to mix the slime, then give them whisks, beaters or forks to beat it into

foam. Add other kitchen gadgets to explore the slime with. You could make a really big quantity of

slime and put it outside in a paddling pool so children can sit in it. Take care and stay close, it’s

slippy! Or you could put slime in a bowl on the floor and let children put their feet in it to see how it

feels. Put the bowl on a towel.

**Children (3 to 5)**

Give the children the ingredients and a simple pictorial recipe and let them make their own slime,

colouring it as they whish – black or green will probably be favourites! Talk with then as they make

the slime and play with it, exploring the process of mixing, whisking, colouring, as well as how the

slime feels as they work. Give them a really big bowl – can they make the slime fill the bowl?

What makes the slime get bigger?

**Jelly**

* **'Jelly' Paint**

Jelly paint is wonderful to use with babies from when they learn to sit for their very first 'messy play' experiences! It has a lovely texture, and you don't have to worry about what is going into their little bodies should they put a fistful of the paint in their mouths.

1/2 cup of natural food dye  
1 heaped tablespoon cornflour.

Mix the natural food dye in to the cornflour slowly, at first to make a smooth paste, and as you add more of the natural dye, to make what will eventually look like a milky liquid. Put the liquid into a saucepan, and stir constantly over a high heat, until it starts to thicken, turn off the heat and continue to stir until it becomes a thick clear - jelly like textured paint.

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* **Creepy Crawly Jelly**

**You will need:**

* Bowl
* Jelly
* Plastic spiders and other bugs

**Activity:**

Make the jelly according to the packet instructions, involving older children in this process. Talk the children through the process as they help and let them watch the jelly cubes melt into the warm water. The children can then put plastic spiders and other bu

gs into the jelly before placing it in the fridge to set.

Once set put the jelly onto the table or into a messy play tray for the children to play with and explore using a range of senses.

If you wish to complete this activity with children under the age of two larger plastic bugs will need to be used, so you will fit less in the jelly, so you may prefer to make more jelly to cover these larger bugs.

**Areas of learning covered:**

* Knowledge and Understanding of the World
* Language, Literacy and Communication skills
* Personal and Social development
* **Jelly Pasta play**
* A fun activity that adds a different feel to jelly play.
* Prepare the chosen flavour jelly in a bowl, place some dried pasta shapes into the liquid jelly and leave to set. Once it has set, allow the children to play with the jelly exploring the different feelings.
* Rice and fruit amongst other objects can be placed into the jelly before it has set.

**Tinned Foods**

* **Instant or Whipped Cream or Shaving Foam**

These substances all give good sensory experiences, and allow babies and young children to explore using a range of senses. Cream also offers opportunities to taste as well as touch and smell. Cream and aerosol shaving foam have similar but not identical textures. Choose nonallergenic shaving foams.

**Children (24-36 months)**

Place foams in deeper trays and create a treasure hunt for children by hiding buttons, pebbles,

coins, big beads, small world figures etc. Develop texture by adding glitter, pasta, lentils, sand,

beads etc. Children can begin to make their own patterns in the foam or cream, developing wrist,

finger and hand control, mark-making skills and hand-eye co-ordination. Try foams on flat sheets

of card, plastic or a cheap shower curtain.

**Children (3 to 5**)

Use coloured foams to develop story telling skills. Add small world, cars, play people, animals,

dinosaurs etc. Try using both sides of a Perspex sheet to copy patterns or make backgrounds.

Add colours (paint or food colouring) to explore colour mixing or changing. Make repeating

patterns, letter shapes, zigzags, loops, circles. Take prints of coloured foam (not cream!) by

pressing paper very gently on the pattern and peeling off.

* **Rice Pudding Play**

**You will need:**

* Tins of rice pudding
* Water tray or a deep tray
* Tea set
* Containers of various shapes and sizes
* Plastic Animals or other favourite toys

**Activity:**

Empty the tins of rice pudding into a water tray or smaller messy play trays. Allow the children to make a mess exploring the texture, taste and smell. Add toys to the rice pudding for the children to play with, such as a tea set or containers of various shapes and sizes. Different toys can be added which will suit the individual children’s interests.

Older children whilst completing this activity can begin to learn about early volume and early mathematical language, such as full and empty as well as experimenting with the containers and how much each can hold for example.

**Areas of learning covered:**

* Personal and Social development
* Language, Literacy and Communication skills
* Mathematical development
* **Baked Bean Play**

**You will need:**

* Tins of baked beans
* Various toys such as:
* Tea set
* Mega blocks
* Stacking cups
* Range of containers

**Activity:**

Pour the Beans onto the table or into an activity tray. Allow the children to get messy, using a range of senses to explore the smell and texture of the beans for example with the assistance of different toys or containers.

When completing this activity with children over the age of two you could discuss with the children the feel of the beans and smell etc.

**Areas of learning covered:**

* Personal and Social development
* Language, Literacy and Communication skills
* Physical development
* **Custard Play**

**You will need:**

* Tins of custard
* Water tray or a deep tray
* Tea set
* Containers of various shapes and sizes
* Plastic Animals

**Activity:**

Empty the tins of custard into a water tray or smaller messy play trays. Allow the children to make a mess exploring the texture, taste and smell of the custard. Add toys to the custard for the children to play with, such as a tea set or containers of various shapes and sizes. Different toys can be added which will suit the individual children’s interests.

Older children whilst completing this activity can begin to learn about early volume and early mathematical language, such as full and empty as well as experimenting with the containers and how much each can hold for example.

**Areas of learning covered**

* Personal and Social development
* Language, Literacy and Communication skills
* Mathematical development

## Mushy Pea Play

Children of all ages will enjoy playing and eating! the peas.

* Open a tin of mushy peas and give each child a pile in front of them, to feel and experiment with their hands. Toys such as a tea set, mega blocks, cars or plastic animals can be added to this activity for the children to enjoy.
* **Spaghetti Play**

**You will need:**

* Tins of spaghetti
* Various toys such as:
* Tea set
* Mega blocks
* Stacking cups
* Range of containers

**Activity:**

Pour the Spaghetti onto the table or into an activity tray. Allow the children to get messy, using a range of senses to explore the smell and texture of the spaghetti for example, with the assistance of different toys or containers.

When completing this activity with children over the age of two, you could discuss with the children the feel and smell of the spaghetti etc.

**Areas of learning covered:**

* Personal and Social development
* Language, Literacy and Communication skills
* Physical development

**Pasta**

* **Rice Play**

**You will need:**

* Rice
* Tea set
* Or other toys, such as mega blocks or animals etc

**Activity:**

Pour rice into a tray and allow children to play in it using a variety of their favourite toys or containers. This activity can also promote mathematical develoment, helping children to understand the concepts of volume, empty and full etc.

**Areas of learning covered:**

* Mathematical development
* Creative development
* Language, Literacy and Communication skills
* Knowledge and Understanding of the World
* **Cooked Pasta**

Cooked pasta of all sorts is ideal for developing hand and finger control – it’s also great fun for

children of all ages. Try to find different sorts (tubes, spaghetti, noodles, stars, sheets, animal

shapes). Cook the pasta in boiling water till it is ‘al dente’ and let it cool before using. Add a bit of oil to stop the pasta from sticking together.

**Children (24-36 months)**

Add small world creatures to cooked pasta for small world play. Try making blue spaghetti,

putting it in a paddling pool and adding sea creatures. Offer some kitchen tools and saucepans for

pretend play and developing hand control – try strainers, tongs, spoons, tweezers, pasta lifters.

Add spaghetti to a water tray and watch what happens as the pasta dissolves in water.

**Children (3 to 5)**

Offer cocked pasta outside to make patterns, shapes and scenes on paving stones and paths.

Leave the remains for the birds to eat. Offer the children different colours of food colouring to

make their own coloured pasta – put some cooked pasta and chosen colouring in a zip lock

plastic bag and children can squidge it about with their hands until it is coloured. Use for free play,pictures or role play.

* **Cooked Pasta Play**

**You will need:**

* Cooked pasta
* Tea set, containers
* Or other toys
* Sauce Pan or Bowl
* Cooker or Microwave
* Colander

**Activity:**

Pour some water into the the pan or bowl and pour the pasta into the water. Either using a cooker or microwave cook the pasta. Once the pasta is cooked pour into a colander and hold under a cold water tap to cool the pasta, before the children play with it, alternatively leave to cool naturally.

Put some pasta onto the table or into an empty water tray for children to explore. Add toys to the pasta to add to their enjoyment and learning opportunities, such as tea sets, various shapes and sizes of containers, mega blocks or animals for example.

Older children can be involved in the cooking practice by helping to prepare the pasta before it is cooked. By doing this they can see and understand the changes in the pasta that occurs when it is cooked. They will also be able to use this activity as an opportunity to learn simple, early mathematical language, such as, empty, full, more and less.

**Areas of learning covered:**

* Personal and Social development
* Knowledge and Understanding of the World
* Mathematical development
* **Dry Pasta Play**

**You will need:**

* Dry pasta
* Tea set, containers
* Or other toys

**Activity:**

Pour some pasta onto the table or into an empty water tray for children to explore. Add toys to the pasta to add to their enjoyment and learning opportunities, such as tea sets, various shapes and sizes of containers, mega blocks or animals for example.

Older children can use this activity as an opportunity to learn simple, early mathematical language, such as, empty, full, more and less. They can also learn about the process of cooking, where the pasta is dry and hard before it is cooked. You could then cook some of the pasta for them as a comparison.

**Areas of learning covered:**

* Personal and Social development
* Knowledge and Understanding of the World
* Mathematical development

**Paper**

* **Shredded Paper Play**

**You will need:**

* Shredder
* Coloured paper of different thickness
* Choice of toys

**Activity:**

Shred the paper and into a bowl or large tray, such as a water tray. Put some toys into the paper, such as mega blocks, containers, tea set, animals or domino men and allow the children to explore the texture of the different papers. By filling containers etc, the children can begin to learn about early simple concept of capacity.

Change the toys in the activity according to the children’s ages and interests.

**Areas of learning covered:**

* Personal and Social development
* Mathematical development
* Language, Literacy and Communication skills

**Paint**

* **Mud Painting**

A very messy activity more suited for older children.

Place some earth into a large bowl and stir in some water. Alternatively the children can do this and have the fun of taking it in turns to make their own mud.

Give the children a piece of paper and allow them to dip their hands into the mud and make their own patterns on the paper.

These pictures can be used to form a display as part of a farm or garden topic.

* **Painted ball play**

Children of all ages will enjoy making different patterns with the paint.

**You will need:**

* Large pieces of paper
* Trays
* Paints in a variety of colours
* Balls

**Activity:**

Stick the large pieces of paper to the floor either inside on lino or outside is best. Fill the deep trays with different colour paints and place around the outside of the paper. Provide the children with a choice of balls, depending on their age you could use marbles, ping pong balls or plastic balls from a ball pool. Children can dip their ball into their chosen colour and roll it across the paper to make different patterns.

Older children can play in small groups and roll the balls between their friends and make up their own fun games.

**Areas of learning covered:**

* Creative development
* Personal and Social development
* Physical development
* **Paint ice cube pictures**

Very messy, but a fun activity for all children.

Pour some paint into ice cube trays and place in the freezer until frozen. Provide the children with large pieces of paper and turn the paint cubes out into a tray. As the children play with the cubes they will melt, and can be used to make different patterns and pictures.

* **Painting**

**You don’t just need brushes and an easel. Be inventive!**

* **Use sponges, fingers, hands, feet and other various objects to make marks.**
* **Roll out old wallpaper in the garden and encourage children to make footprints across – mix colours, compare feet sizes etc.**
* **Use washing up bottles filled with watery paint to squeeze and spray across paper.**
* **Flick brushes across paper to make patterns.**
* **Bubble painting - Blow bubbles in pots of watery paint and lay paper across the top of the pot to catch the pattern.**
* **Marble painting - Dip marbles in paint and roll them over paper in a tray to explore lines and patterns.**
* **Blow painting - Make up different coloured runny paint to drop onto paper, Use a straw to blow the paint in different directions. Watch what happens when two colours mix.**
* **String painting - Drop string in paint then pull it across paper like a snake in different directions.**
* **Mirror image painting - Paint one half of paper, then fold it, press down and open to create a mirror image. This is good for butterflies and other symmetrical objects.**
* **Potato prints - Great effects can be achieved by printing with potatoes. Cut the potato in half and cut patterns into the flat side before you dip it into paint. This is great for encouraging repeating patterns.**
* **Welly boot printing - on rolls of wall paper.**
* **Magic painting – draw over white paper with a white candle. Make the picture appear by painting over with watered down paint.**