

# Supporting Your Child through Routine and Play

## From Your Occupational Therapist



Image from: <https://www.parentingforbrain.com/sensory-activities-importance-sensory-play/>

Created by: Ashley Arguin (OT), Taylor Riffel (OT), Caitlin Angus (OT), & your Occupational Therapy team

## Importance of Maintaining Routines

*Creating and maintaining routines within the home while children are away from school is an important strategy to support everyone within your home. Routines create structure and predictability, which helps your child anticipate what their day will look like. Routines help to support your child's regulation, engagement, participation, and learning.*

***Don't forget that PLAY is your child's biggest job. There is so much that your child can learn through play!***

*Adding supports to help children understand their new routine is also important. You may choose to create a visual schedule with drawings, photos from the internet, or possibly a written schedule (if appropriate for your child).*









*Attached are examples of different activities you can add to your child's daily routine and what their schedule may look like. **Please consult with your team about which activities might be the most appropriate for your child.** Each child has different needs and a different level of understanding, it is important we support them in a way that makes sense to them!*

Examples of activities that you can add into your child's daily routine include:

- Participation in Daily Routines (see pages 4-5)
- Games and Activities (see page 6)
- Sensory Play /Crafts (see page 7-10)
- Science Experiments (see page 11)
- Keeping Active (see page 12-13)
- Learning Resources (see page 14)

## Visual Schedule Example

MY DAY

1	 toilet	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	 breakfast	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	 brush teeth	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	 craft	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	 outside	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	 snack	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	 books	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	 play	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please speak to your team about:

- How many items is most appropriate for your child
- How specific the items should be
- Whether or not you should use real pictures, symbols, or words
- How you can introduce the schedule
- The best way to show your child that an activity is all done

## Your Child's Participation in Daily Routines

*Increasing your child's participation in daily routines is not only a fun way to engage your child, but it also helps them to practice skills that work towards growing their independence.*

- **Toileting:**
  - Being home might be a great opportunity to practice toilet training (if your child is at this stage). Speak to your occupational therapist about what appropriate steps might be.
  
- **Tooth Brushing:**
  - With fewer time restrictions it might be a great time to practice tooth brushing. Speak to your occupational therapist about the best way to practice this task with your child.
  
- **Making the Bed:**
  - Consider if this would be an appropriate chore to have your child participate in.
  - Your occupational therapist will be able to support you if you're not sure if it is an appropriate activity for your child or if you're not sure how to teach the skill.
  
- **Eating Breakfast:**
  - Is there room to increase your child's independence with feeding?
  - Decreased time restraints may provide additional time for your child to increase his/her independence.
  - Speak to your occupational therapist about what the best way to practice with your child might be.
  
- **Clean Up:**
  - With increased time at home comes increased opportunities to practice cleaning up once your child is finished with their toys/activities.
  - There are also increased opportunities to involve your children in cleaning up after meals (e.g., bringing their dishes to the sink).
  - Contact your occupational therapist if you would like support determining appropriate expectations or how to teach these expectations.
  
- **Mealtime Routines:**
  - You may choose to increase your child's participation in mealtime routines in a number of ways.
    - Your child may be able to help prepare simple dishes with supervision to ensure safety.
    - Your child may be able to help set the table or clean up afterwards.

- This is also a great opportunity to have more meals together to increase the amount of mealtime modelling your child is receiving. Mealtime modelling is a very important part of increasing a child's comfort with new/non-preferred foods.
- **Dressing:**
  - Dressing routines are often time-limited, especially in the morning when families are rushing to get out the door to make it to school, work, or daycare on time.
  - This may be a great opportunity to increase your child's independence by taking time to work on this skill if it is appropriate for your child's development.
- **Laundry:**
  - Laundry is often thought of as an 'adult' job, but there are plenty of roles a child could take to be involved.
  - They may carry the basket or a few items to the washing machine, they may help put the clothes in or take them out, they may also enjoy pressing the buttons (with adult guidance).

**Food Play/Exposure:**

- If you have a picky eater in your home, you have probably heard lots about food play and food exposure. Speak to your occupational therapist about appropriate, no-pressure activities to expose your child to new/challenging foods during this time at home.
- Encourage conversations about the different colours, textures, smells, shapes, and flavours of food items.
- Make trying new foods fun and pressure free!!

## Games/Activities

*There are lots of fun ideas of games and activities that can be done in your home! Remember your child's number one job is to PLAY. Playtime = lots of time for learning opportunities!*

- Build a fort using blankets, chairs, couch cushions etc.
- Create a treasure/scavenger hunt
- LEGO
- Puzzles
- Make a paper airplane
- Make musical instruments
  - Empty yogurt containers can be drums
  - A Kleenex box with elastics around it may be a guitar
  - Any container with rice or dry pasta can be a shaker
- Read books
- Sing songs
- Blow bubbles
- Have a dance party. You can find many fun kid songs on YouTube. Some common songs your child might like include:
  - Slippery fish
  - Tooty ta
  - Let's go swimming (fish song)
  - Head and shoulders
  - Zoom zoom
  - Baby shark
  - Freeze dance
  - Wheels on the bus
  - Twinkle twinkle
  - ABCs
  - If you're happy and you know it
- Play with balloons
  - You can practice hitting the balloon with different parts of the body (to help develop body awareness)
  - Make ping pong rackets out of cardboard and play a game of indoor badminton.
    - Play with a soft ball, balloon, or bean bag

## Sensory Play/Crafts

### Sensory Crafts:

- **Create Your Own Sensory Bin:** *Sensory bins are containers filled with various sensory stimulating materials. They are a great way to work on fine motor skills such as scooping, dumping pouring, pinching, etc. Talk to your occupational therapists about what materials they feel would best support your child's individual needs.*

1. Find a Bin:
  - Rubbermaid container
  - Basin
  - Box
  - Large Tupperware
2. Choose a Filler:
  - Water
  - Sand
  - Salt
  - Uncooked rice/ pasta
  - Water beads
  - Shredded paper
  - Coffee beans
  - Shaving cream
  - Beans or chickpeas
3. Add Additional Items:
  - Spoons
  - Toy shovels/rakes
  - Toy animals
  - Toy cars
  - Letters
  - Shapes
  - Empty toilet paper rolls
  - Cups
  - Bowls
  - Funnels
  - Scoops
  - Tongs



Image from: <http://blog.learningresources.com/educational-sensory-bins/>

- **Create Your Own Sensory Bag:**
  - Supplies:
    - Ziplock bags
    - Hair gel or shaving cream
    - Food coloring
    - Any small items or glitter you would like to add
    - Duct tape

- Directions:

1. Fill ziplock bag with either hair gel or shaving cream.
  - Do not overfill bag (see picture).
  - Note: you may choose to mix food coloring or paint with the gel ahead of time to create a more solid color, or you may choose to have the child mix them by squishing the bag once sealed.
2. Add other fillings: glitter, food coloring, paint, confetti, beans, buttons, letters, beads, googly eyes etc
  - Again, be careful to not overfill the bag.
  - Note: sharp fillings may puncture the bag and cause a leak
3. Squeeze all the air out of the bag then seal it. Use duct tape or packing tape to secure the bag so it doesn't accidentally open during play. You can also double bag it to prevent any spills.
4. The bags may be taped to a table or window during play. Your child may choose to squeeze these bags or draw shapes/letters in them.



Image from: <https://handsonaswegrow.com/color-sorting-sensory-bag/>

- **Create Your Own Sensory Bottle (Ocean in a Bottle Sensory Bottle):**

- Supplies:

- Old pop/water bottle
- Water
- Cooking oil
- Food coloring
- Funnel
- Glitter or small objects (such as beads) as you wish

- Directions:

- Fill approx. 1/3 of the bottle with water
- Add several drops of food coloring
- Put the lid on and have the child shake the bottle
- Open the bottle and fill the rest with oil (leaving some space at the top to allow room to shake)
- Seal the lid well (hot glue around the top works well)
- Have the child shake and watch the bottle for a fun visual sensory experience!

- **Create Your Own Sensory Bottle (Water Bottle Seek and Find):**

- Supplies:

- Old water/pop bottle
- Rice, dried lentils, salt, etc.



- Small objects such as shapes or animals that fit inside the selected bottle
- Hot glue or tape to secure the lid on the bottle
- Directions:
  1. Fill a water bottle with rice, dried lentils, or salt
  2. Add different objects to the bottle (small plastic animals, foam shapes, or craft supplies) and make a paper list the different items in the bag
  3. Tape the cap of the lid so the child is unable to unscrew the lid easily
  4. Encourage the child to play a game of “eye spy” to find different items in the bottle



Image from: <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/84724036717917073/>

- **Create Your Own Sensory Bottle (Sensory Shaker Bottle):**

- Supplies:
  - Old pop/water bottle (2 Litre pop or mouthwash bottle)
  - Rice, beans, beads, sparkles, tinsel etc
  - Funnel
- Directions:
  1. Fill approx. 1/3 of the bottle with the decorations of your choice
  2. Seal the lid well (hot glue around the top works well)
  3. Have the child shake, listen, and look at the bottle for a fun sensory experience



Image from: <https://expatfamilyq8.wordpress.com/2013/07/29/homemade-sensory-music-shakers/>

- **Mini 'Volcanoes':**

- Supplies:
  - Vinegar
  - Food colouring
  - Plate/dish
  - Eye droppers, plastic syringes, cups, spoons etc.
- Directions:
  1. Place baking soda on a dish
  2. Use a dropper, cup, spoon, etc. to pour/drop vinegar mixed with food colouring
  3. Watch/listen to the bubbles 'erupt'

### **Other Craft / Fine Motor Ideas:**

*Many of these tasks help develop a functional pincer grasp. The pincer grasp is used for many activities including writing, zipping zippers, buttoning buttons, and picking up small objects. Many of these activities also help with bilateral coordination- meaning the child is improving their ability to use both hands together.*

- Paint
- Colour (on blank paper or using printable colouring sheets that be found online)
- Play with stickers
- Mazes/dot to dots can be found online
- Trace your child's body on a large piece of paper and have him/her decorate it
- Placing items in a coffee tin
  - Create slits in the top of a coffee container with a sharp knife
  - Use buttons, popsicle sticks, or other small items to drop in
  - Try framing each slit with a colored sharpie marker or paint and have the child match colors
- Using tweezers or clothes pins to pick up small objects
  - Try using pompoms, beads, marbles etc.
  - You may have the child sort the items based on shape, color, size etc.
    - You can use a muffin tin as a means of sorting
    - You can use paper towel tubes/ toilet paper tubes or pool noodles as a ramp or tunnel to drop the item through
- Placing clothes pins on popsicle sticks, clotheslines, edge of bowls, etc.
- Use an eye dropper to transfer water
  - You can use an ice cube tray, bowl, muffin tins etc. to hold the water
- Drawing on a white board
- Beading activities
  - You may try any combination of:
    - Beads, cheerios, fruit loops, macaroni etc
    - String, dry spaghetti, pipe cleaners, etc.
- Weaving/ lacing activities
  - You can make these yourself by hole punching around cardboard and having the child lace string or laces through the holes
- Placing buttons or plastic poker chips in slits cut in a foam pool noodle
- Weaving pipe cleaners through strainers/colander
- Q-tip painting
- Place paper on your walls/floors or place plastic wrap on windows to allow your children to draw on different surfaces

*\*Your occupational therapist will be able to guide you to pick the most appropriate materials\**

## Science Experiments

- **Walking Water:**

- Supplies:

- Food colouring
    - Paper towel
    - Water
    - Clear jars/ cups

- Directions:

1. Fill two jars  $\frac{1}{2}$  full, leaving the final jar empty
2. Place 5 drops of blue food coloring in one jar with water
3. Place 5 drops of yellow food colouring in the other jar with water
4. Place the empty jar between the two coloured jars
5. Place one piece of paper towel folded lengthwise twice between each coloured jar and the middle empty jar (see photo)
6. Watch as the water climbs into the middle glass to make a brand new colour!



Image from: <https://www.pbs.org/parents/crafts-and-experiments/experiment-with-walking-water>

- **Skittles Rainbow:**

- Supplies:

- Skittles
    - Water
    - A white plate

- Directions:

1. Place the skittles in the order of the colours of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, purple) around the outside edge of a white plate
2. Pour a small amount of warm water in the middle of the plate (just enough to touch all candies around the outside)
3. Watch what happens!
4. Slowly turn the plate to see the colours swirl

## Keeping Active

*New routines, more time at home, and winter creates a challenge for getting enough physical activity! Movement helps with emotional and sensory regulation, stimulating appetite, bowel function, attention, and more!*

*Here are some simple suggestions for meeting your child's movement needs while following the COVID-19 precautions. Talk to your occupational or physical therapist for suggestions on activities that are best for your child. And remember, new activities (or familiar activities in a different environment) may take repeated modeling before your child is ready to participate.*

- **Jumping on the Bed:** *If your family is comfortable with kids jumping on the bed, this is a good way to meet energy needs, with supervision for safety and to prevent falls. Mattresses can be moved onto the floor to increase safety. Suggestions:*
  - Sing 5 Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed (model falling down, touching head) or play the song on CD or phone
  - Chop Chop Timber (pretend to “chop” down your child, who is the tree, and model for them to crash down as you say “timber!”)
  - Dance or jump to favourite songs on the mattress
  - Freeze Dance on the mattress
  - Blow bubbles while your kids bounce around and pop the bubbles
  - Turn off the lights. Shine a flashlight on the mattress for your child to jump on. Move the light around for them to keep jumping!
  - Wrestling on the bed for kids who like rough and tumble play
  
- **Heavy Work:** *these are activities that involve heavy resistance and input to the muscles and joints to help the body process movement and touch information*
  - Scavenger hunts with heavy “treasure” such as bean bags, beanie babies toys, sensory water bottles, soup cans with coloured paper taped on for themed labels. Incorporate your child's interests: write numbers or letters on the lids or labels, etc.
  - Animal walks such as crab walks, bear walks. Model for your child and make it fun by pairing with a song or race.
  - Make a “wagon” for your child to pull around the home. Tie a scarf or rope to the handle of a laundry basket, place stuffies, books, a small sibling, and help them tow. Put a blanket underneath to decrease the noise and scratching the floor.
  - Have your child help you carry laundry baskets, put away groceries, collect stacks of books, etc.
  
- **Outdoor Play:** *Outdoor play is safe during social distancing, if done in small groups. Just walking through snow adds significant effort and will help your child get exercise, sunlight, and fresh air. Dressing for the weather is important, but it is possible to enjoy the outdoors in below 0 temperatures! Remember, schools have outdoor recess until colder than -20*

*degrees Celsius, so it is definitely possible to do as a family. Talk to your team about any safety concerns you have about taking your children outside.*

- Make footprints in the snow
  - Bring shovels, scoops, even kitchen utensils and bowls outside to play “cooking” in the snow
  - Dig with shovels; fill buckets with snow, carry them and dump them to make a “mountain”
  - Make a snow man
  - Bring dinosaurs outside and make dinosaur footprints in the snow
  - Move your scavenger hunt outside!
  - Play tag or chase
  - Put food colouring in a squirt bottle and squirt onto the snow
  - Go to the playground!
  - Sing movement songs outside, such as Ring around the Rosie
  - Make snow angels
  - Have a snowball fight
  - Make snow castles
- **Other Ideas**
    - Floor is Lava game (put pillows, mats, etc on the floor and try to jump from spot to spot, without touching the floor)
    - Activity song and movement videos on YouTube: Go Noodle or Cosmic Kids Yoga

## Learning Resources

### Educational Online Games and Videos

- [www.pbskids.org](http://www.pbskids.org)
- [www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com)
- [www.kids.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.kids.nationalgeographic.com)
- [www.ABCmouse.com/redeem](http://www.ABCmouse.com/redeem) use code: 2568
- [www.scholastic.com/learnathome](http://www.scholastic.com/learnathome)
- [www.play.prodigygame.com](http://www.play.prodigygame.com)
- [www.khanacademy.org](http://www.khanacademy.org)
- [www.typingclub.com](http://www.typingclub.com)
- [www.squigglepark.com](http://www.squigglepark.com)
- [www.mysterydoug.com](http://www.mysterydoug.com)

### Educational YouTube Videos

- Videos for Toddlers with Blippi
- Super Simple Songs – Kids Songs
- Dave and Ava - Nursery Rhymes and Baby Songs
- PBS Kids
- CoComelon Nursery Rhymes and Kids Songs
- Toddler Fun Learning
- Lotty Learns
- Free School
- Super Kids TV

### Movement Breaks:

- Cosmic Kids Yoga
- GoNoodle