

Ideas for Play in Small Spaces

Information for Parents and Children



The current climate has provided us with many challenges and opportunities to spend more time in our apartments and houses. For parents and children, this can be difficult but here are a list of eight activities and games you can play at home in small spaces.

1. Mindfulness Magic:

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to the present moment, on purpose and in a kind and non-judgemental manner. Mindfulness can decrease anxiety and stress and can be practised in small spaces. Ways of practising mindfulness with your child could include the following:

- Practise *Gratitude*: You may start your day by writing down three things you are grateful for in the morning.
- Mindful colouring and mindful. This can be done by encouraging your child to be present in the moment when engaging in activities.
- Bed-time body scans or bed time stories can also be practised and found online. Apps such as mindful gnats, the calm app and websites such as www.louiseshangher.com explain mindfulness for children and young people further.



Tips for Talking

- ★ Try to reduce background noise and distractions, where possible.
- ★ For younger children or children who have more difficulty with the language, use short, simple sentences and simpler vocabulary e.g. you may use the word "happy" instead of 'grateful'.
- ★ Use lots of words to describe the things you are grateful for and the sensations in your body. Name body parts as you scan (e.g. *shoulder, elbow, wrist, palm, forehead, neck, mind*), action words (e.g. *scan, check, feel, stop, breathe*) and describing words (e.g. *grateful, happy, thankful, slow*).
- ★ For older children, you can explain the meaning of trickier words like "present" and "mindful".

2. Get Creative:

Engaging in creative activities can be fun ways of developing your child's skills and imagination. Making a glitter jar with your child can be fun and a sensory strategy to alert and calm his or her visual system. To complete this activity you will need the following:



Materials

- Jar or Bottle
- Water
- Glitter/glitter glue and/or stars
- Food colouring

Instructions

- Add warm water to the jar or bottle until it is one third full.
- Add the glitter and stir.
- Add 3 drops of food colouring and stir.
- Pour in the glitter/stars.
- Top up the jar with the rest of the warm water until it is almost full and put the lid on it.
- Shake and watch the glitter rise and fall.



Tips for Talking



- ★ Use this opportunity to talk about the concepts of full and empty e.g. label your jar as full, then have another jar, and say this jar 'is empty'. Later, talk about other items that are full or empty. If your child struggles with concepts, introduce one concept at a time e.g. say 'this jar is full, this other jar is **not full**', rather than introducing the word 'empty'. Empty could be introduced in a separate time.
- ★ This activity provides opportunities to highlight new descriptive vocabulary for your child. Talk about what the completed jar looks like e.g. it's glittering, sparkling, shimmering, twinkling. You could make up actions to go along with your new words!

3. Rainbow Rice:

Making rainbow rice is a nice calming sensory based activity which once created, can be used with your child a number of times during tactile activities.

Materials

- Rice
- Vinegar
- Food colouring or icing gels
- Zip lock bags or containers

Instructions

- a) Pour a cup of rice into a container and add 4 teaspoons of food colouring or icing gels to the container or bag and mix around.
- b) Add 1/2 teaspoons of vinegar and mix and shake.
- c) Alternate this with the colours you have and leave to dry overnight.
- d) Mix all the colours together in a large box.

Tips for Talking



- ★ Name objects e.g. *glitter, cup, container, food colouring*.
- ★ Name actions for the things you and/or your child is doing e.g. *mix, shake, blend, add, pour, dry, touch, feel*.
- ★ Use describing words for how things look and feel e.g. *sticky, glittery, colourful, calming, tactile*.
- ★ Give instructions at the level that your child can understand. Your child may be at the stage at understanding one step instructions e.g. "*pour the rice into the cup*" or they may be able to cope with two or even three step instructions e.g. "*pour the rice into the cup, then add 4 teaspoons of colouring, then mix it around*".

4. X and O or Tick Tack:



Materials

- Paper plates x 10
- Coloured paper tape
- Marker

Instructions

- a) On the floor, lay down a grid with three straight lines and three horizontal lines evenly spaced (as seen in the above picture).
- b) Mark 'O' on the back of five paper plates and 'X' on the other five paper plates.
- c) One person takes the 'O' plates and the other person takes the 'X' plates.
- d) Player takes turns putting plates in the grid in an attempt to get three plates in a row.

Tips for Talking



- ★ This game encourages turn-taking skills. Use your names to signal whose turn it is e.g. 'it's Mam's turn, 'it's John's turn' as this will support your child's understanding of turns. Praise your child for waiting and taking turns.
- ★ You could add a language layer to this game, by choosing a category, and asking your child to name an object/item from that category before they take their turn e.g. before each turn we have to name an animal, a food, a vehicle etc.

5. Taped Roads:



Materials

- Coloured paper tape
- Toy car
- Table or floor

Instructions

Use the coloured paper tape to make roads and drive the car around the roads for imaginative play. This is also good for fine motor and visual skills.

Tips for Talking

- ★ This game gives opportunities for you to use lots of:
 - Position words e.g. drive the car **up**, **down**, go **left** and **right**, **around** the corner, **across** the road, in the **middle** of the road etc.
 - Describing words as you build the road e.g. will we make a **long** road or a **short** road, a **narrow** or **wide** road, use a **big** or **little** car and as you drive the cars e.g. drive the car **fast** or **slow**.
 - Action words to describe what you and/or your child is doing e.g. "you are **driving**, **building**, **creating**, **using your imagination**, **engineering**" etc.
- ★ If your child needs support to follow instructions, try breaking the information down in to smaller chunks and giving instructions one at a time.

6. Cooking/Baking



This can be a time to develop your child independent living skills. Allocate appropriate cooking tasks to meet the child's skill level. Get your child to stir the bowl of ingredients, put toppings on a pizza or even turn the pages of the cookbook. Involving your child in the process will help with confidence and fine motor skill development.

Tips for Talking



- ★ Cooking and baking is a good time to encourage children's ability to sequence and to incorporate concepts such as before, after, first, last, next. Read the recipe and see if your child can identify what to do first!
- ★ If your child needs support to follow instructions, try breaking the information down in to smaller chunks and giving instructions one at a time.
- ★ Label your actions in the moment as these might be new words for your child e.g. weighing, measuring, stirring, pouring. Repeat these words lots of times for your child.

7. Body Outlines:

Either you or your child lies on a large piece of paper, or on the path. Take a pencil or piece of chalk and draw around your child's body. Name each body part as you trace around it. This is a lovely activity to develop body awareness.



Tips for Talking



- ★ Name body parts as you trace around them. Give labels to parts of the body we do not typically name e.g. **wrist, ribs, ankle, shin, thigh, jaw**.
- ★ Talk about the function of each body part e.g. "you use your hand to **throw, catch, eat, write, wave, give high fives, open the door**" etc.
- ★ Give your child instructions to follow to build their understanding e.g. "**touch your nose with your left finger**", "**touch your shin**", "**wiggle your hips**" etc.



8. Reading and Listening to music:

Encourage your child to read a book. Ask them questions about the book and the main characters. Encourage your child to pick their favourite songs and sing and dance along to these.



Tips for Talking



- ★ Reading provides an opportunity for developing your child's understanding of questions e.g. ask your child '**who** was in the story?', '**where** did they go?' '**why** did they do that?' '**what** might happen next?'
- ★ You can prompt conversation with your child by making comments about the story which encourages them to relay their own experiences e.g. 'I don't think I'd like it if....' 'I love this...'

For more information go to:

- www.pinterest.com
- <https://preschoolinspirations.com/glitter-jars/>
- <https://www.learnwithplayathome.com/2014/12/diy-kids-hotel-activity-pack.html>