



Sand tray play

- Sand tray play involves playing with sand or with objects in sand.
- Sand tray play can be a rich sensory experience for children who can't get out into nature.
- Sand tray play can be calming and good for imaginative play.



What you need for sand tray play



Sand tray play is **simple and doesn't cost much**. You can use a lot of things from around your home.

Here's what you need:

- a wooden or plastic tray with a small lip on the sides – 30cm x 20 cm or bigger is best
- clean sand or dry rice
- a selection of small objects like toys, animal figurines, cars, pebbles, small containers, leaves or coloured blocks
- a towel for dusting sand off after the activity.

Children can play on their own or with one or two others, including you or another carer. You might need to supervise your young child if they're playing on their own.



Avoid small parts, breakable parts or brittle materials that might be choking hazards. Product Safety Australia's free, do-it-yourself Choke Check tool can help you identify toys and other objects that pose choking or ingestion hazards.

How to do sand tray play

- Put the sand or rice in the tray.
 - Let your child explore at their own pace. Your child might want to trace lines or letters through the sand, make patterns or slowly tip sand from one hand to another.
 - Give your child some objects to use for imaginative play in the sand tray, like pebbles, toys, animal figurines and so on. For example, your child might create an imaginative world using some dinosaurs and pebbles.
 - If you're playing with your child, talk or ask about what they're doing. For example, 'Tell me about this pattern' or 'What does your dinosaur like to do?'
 - Try using different objects each time you play.
-

How to adapt sand tray play to suit children with diverse abilities

Sand tray play is excellent for **children with limited mobility** because you can bring the tray to them. You could put the tray on a table, floor, bed or child's lap. You might need to hold an edge of the tray to keep it stable.

For **children who are developing their pretend play skills**, you could use visual or verbal prompts to help them expand their play.

For **children who find social interaction difficult**, you can use sand tray play to help them play alongside other children without having to look directly at faces. You could try using individual sand trays for each child.

The sensory experience of playing with sand or rice can be calming and relaxing and can be particularly good for **children who are anxious or nervous**. For children who are very agitated, it might be better to use a firmer material like playdough. This gives them something to manipulate and squeeze.
