

Outdoor Learning Experience (Birth to 2 years)

<p>Learning experience: I Can Feel with My Hands</p>	<p>Shared by: D K Gowri</p>
<p>Environment: A shady patch of grassy area that allows mats to be spread out. It would be great if the place is close to plants and trees offering an authentic outdoor ambience. This place should be within the walking vicinity of the school for easy commute.</p>	<p>Estimated time: 15 to 20 minutes (less or more depending on the tolerance and quality active engagement of infant)</p>
<p>Children’s prior experiences: Infant is comfortable dipping hand into textural material such as sand. If infant is not comfortable, this would be a great introduction as moon sand is gentler in texture and has a therapeutic smell which most infants would be familiar with (baby oil). The oil ingredient can be personalised for the infants, for example if an infant is familiar with lavender oil, it can be added to promote a sense of comfort, as familiarity instils security.</p>	<p>Suitable for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 8 – 17 months old (mobile infant)
<p>What children will experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Infants will dip their hands, and arms into the sensory bin/tub and pull out natural items collected from the environment, such as leaves, twigs, rocks, flowers. ● The infants will come into contact with grass and gain the tactile experience, for familiarity and confidence. ● Infants will knead, manipulate and separate the moon sand to retrieve the hidden items. 	<p>EYDF Pillars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Developing Child ● The Intentional Programme ● The Professional Educarer

What you will need:

- Picnic mats to fit 3 infants
- Moon sand
- Big moulds
- Shapes / cookie cutters
- Assortment of natural materials e.g. leaves, petals, seeds and twigs
- Bath tub or other large container (for sensory bin experience)

Benefit - Risk Assessment:Benefit:

- Language – name the items words to sensitise infants that every item around them has a ‘name’ and it can be used to make reference to it.
- Engage the sensory system to trigger neural connections, which is conducive for complex cognitive development.
- Opportunity to explore materials through discovery.
- Opportunity for infants and toddlers to develop object permanence by finding hidden objects.

Risk:

- Some infants resist the scratchy textures itself. The Infant Cognition Center at Yale University states that their instincts lead infants to demonstrate an aversion towards coming into contact with grass that may protect them from dangerous toxins or thorns. This is a natural survival instinct.
- It is very important that the grass is free of animal droppings or chemicals.
- Insects (ants, beetles) in grass.

Management:

- Ensure that the chosen site is free of animal droppings.
- Check are to ensure no ant nests in vicinity.
- Avoid the newly manured areas, treated grass for a minimum of 4 weeks.

- Observe child's skin for any signs of potential reaction, intolerance or allergy.
- Engage parents' approval and participation.

How to make it happen

Preparations:

- Prepare moon sand
 - Mix 1 cup brown sugar with 1 cup corn flour and 5 tablespoon of baby oil (the amount is to be multiplied as needed).
- When not in use, store the moon sand in an airtight container.
- Place the moon sand at different strategic points directly on the mat; no trays are required.
- Parents of infants should also be notified in advance about messy play activities, so that spare clothes are available. Parents can also send in an old t-shirt that infant could slip-over their clothes while engaged in messy activities.

Procedure:

1. Bring infants for a walk around the immediate outdoor vicinity of the infant care setting.
2. Provide them with a small basket (if they are able to balance and manage).
3. Get infants to collect natural items that interest them.

Suggestion 1: Rolling in moon sand

1. Bring the infants to the mats.
2. Allow infant to manipulate the cool, soft sand - It can be kneaded, shaped, pressed into molds, squeezed, squished and played with.
3. Infants can be encouraged to use the items collected from their natural environment as loose parts to play with the moon sand.

Suggestion 2: Sensory Bin

1. Insert natural items from the outdoor environment into the moon sand.
2. These can item can be retrieved by infants.
3. For this activity, there has to be sufficient moon sand to bury the item.
4. The experience is best done with shallow tubs, like an infant bath tub.
5. Opt for this alternative for infants who are still developing the confidence to immerse themselves in moon sand.
6. As infant discovers the items in the sensory bin, educator to extend learning or engage in meaning interactions that extend vocabulary, meaning and thinking. Below are some suggestions:
 - Name the items specifically

- Describe the smell (if applicable), colour, or texture.
 - Direct where the item was found.
 - Sing a “I spy song.....” naming the items
7. The activity could be wrapped up with a “I spy..” game.
 8. Get infants to stroll around the vicinity with the items that they had retrieved from the sensory bin.
 9. Get infants to use the binoculars to identify where the items were found.
 10. This activity may not be reciprocated actively by infants. They may point, or gaze, but educarers can engage in monologue and inspire infants through this simple game by demonstrating enthusiasm and modelling reciprocation through use of language.