



Infants Sensory Experiences

Vestibular

Body movement and changing of positions activates the vestibular system, which causes the infant to be more alert and attentive. This allows them to do their best gathering of information for early learning. There are various ways to provide beneficial motion stimulation, like gentle side to side movements while holding the infant or in a rocking cradle, up and down like bouncing or lifting, and front to back motion like rocking in a chair.

Tactile

Tactile stimulation is one of the most important ways to communicate with an infant. In many ways, touch is our first language. Gentle and loving touch can help enhance early relationship bonds. Infants who are touched and massaged display more eye contact, smiles and vocalizations. In addition to building bonds of trust and love, gentle massage helps an infant develop body awareness that will be essential in babyhood and toddlerhood.

Visual, Auditory

Vision is not fully developed in infancy, but vision development can be stimulated in a variety of ways. Most infants can focus best on things that are about 10 inches from their eyes -- the perfect distance to see the face of the trusted one holding the infant.

Infants can recognize and discriminate sounds. They usually quiet to the sound of a familiar voice and will respond to sounds and voice characteristics. They enjoy the sounds that they can make themselves. Talking reading, singing and humming are great ways to vary and enrich the auditory stimulation of an infant.



Mobile Infants Gaining Control Experiences

Manipulation

Pre-language intelligence is sensory-motor intelligence. Self initiated intentional inspection and control of small objects help the mobile infant to construct new knowledge. Manipulation play encourages practice of tasks for gaining control of muscles that work the arms, hands, and fingers. These accomplishments will ultimately lead to the mastery of daily living skills like self-feeding, pouring liquids, and play skills with balls and other props.

Space

Babies attempt control skills by first gaining control over their own bodies, then this control can be extended to include their bodies in relation to objects in the environment and control of their bodies in space.

Obstacles

Obstacles challenge a child's quest for postural control. Muscle control is first mastered in the head and neck, then the trunk, then the arms and legs. Mobile infants benefit from obstacles and props that stress stability and locomotion tasks.



Toddlers

Exploratory Experiences



Manipulation

Toddlers need ample opportunity to explore and manipulate a wide variety of objects such as stacking, stringing, twisting, turning, pounding and lifting and carrying play props.

Space

Spaces like tunnels, hoops, jungle gyms, boxes, and baskets encourage recognition of spatial relationships of toddler's body to other objects.

Obstacles

Obstacles and inclines allow practice of spatial relationships as the toddler manages her body in relation to the play structures and gravity. Obstacles that have options for going under, over, up, down, or through encourage not only develop physical competence, but language development as well.

Ball Handling

Inflated and sponge balls of all sizes, shapes, and textures encourage adaptations and adjustments.

Balance

Balance activities challenge the toddler's posture control, stability, and travel abilities as he negotiates different widths, angles, and heights of walking surfaces.

Wheeled Toys

Wheeled toys can encourage pushing and pulling, while riding toys require the child to make coordinated movements, sometimes combining footwork with steering using the hands.

Pretense

Imitating adult behaviors helps children learn social roles, improves imagination, and enhances language development. Carefully selecting and arranging toys and props gives toddlers context clues that can almost serve the same purpose of adult modeling.

Rhythm

Toddlers should be provided ample opportunity to listen to and respond to music. Singing, chanting, and reciting words with music promote language development, body movement, listening skills, and rhythmic reactions in toddlers.

