

Water Play



"Children ...are more willing to share and discuss a self-chosen, self-structured activity when given the time to explore an area of interest."

(Riley and Savage) 7

Think Outside the Trough!

Water play can be out in the rain, splashing about collecting rain drops, as much as in the water trough.

Water, Water Everywhere!

Use water in different ways – a small amount in a tough spot or a paddling pool, several small washing up bowls together on a table or floor, inside and out.

Floating Dough

Try plasticine or play dough in the water tray – what do the children make or do with it?

Washing up Rota

When children have poured their own drinks at the snack bar, ask them to wash their own cup!

Ice Age

If you add ice to the water tray, make it with the children and freeze small objects with it – could be small animals, sequins, flowers etc... Children can then chip these out as they use the ice.

Clean and Tidy

We put a small amount of washing up liquid and a bowl of warm water in the home corner to see what would happen! The floor, pots, surfaces and hands of the children had never been cleaner! Moreover the realism it gave to the home role play was incredible – especially in deciding how turns would be taken, and how children would work together to be safe and get jobs done.

"The Early Years environment is crucial in providing a choice of resources and play areas, and in recognising the senses nurtured by the activities provided."

(Mary Adossides) 10

Magic!

Try cooking oil, glitter and warm water for a truly magical water tray.

Cool Pool!

We made the water tray into a rock pool – some big rocks, seaweed, shells, sand and plastic fish, crabs and snails etc... – we added some fishing nets and buckets too.

Blue Balloon

After reading the story, 'The Blue Balloon' (Mick Inkpen), children showed great interest in balloons and their endless possibilities. As a result, an adult led activity was planned with an 'ice balloon' (a balloon filled with water and left to turn to ice in the freezer). This was placed in a tough spot. It was explored and talked about over a period of time, with adult support and direction. The adult modelled, suggested, showed, talked about, asked opened ended questions about for example, what would happen if pipettes of clear and coloured water were trickled over the balloon. Opening up the balloon skin to explore further then adding salt, warm water, using tools to chip away at ice, recording both visually and verbally the changes to the balloon during the session, pouring and scooping water over the balloon, small world with polar bears and penguins. The adult used these opportunities for observations of, for example language – using and understanding, prediction skills, fine motor control, curiosity.

The children were also interested in the possibilities of balloons filled with water. Several water balloons were filled with varying amounts of water. Children were curious about the marks made by the balloons as they fell onto the floor. This developed into balloon printing on large paper outside. Children explored printing with different colours, mixing colours, finding out how different sized and weights of balloon made a variety of marks on the paper.



Role Play Ideas:

- Café
- Car Wash
- Laundry
- Hairdresser's (wash an adult's hair?)
- Window cleaners
- Lemonade factory
- Rock pool
- Beach
- Dr Foster (splashing in puddles).
- Plumbers' merchants.



Decision Wheel

Sometimes it's hard to think of new things for the water tray, so we organised our resources so that we can always have a variety of options. By using the decision wheel at any point we can slightly alter the learning experience by changing our minds – just as simple as altering the temperature or colour of the water. If we want a specific learning intention to develop we start at that point – e.g. understanding floating and sinking we start with equipment decisions and then decide on any additives and the temperature of the water etc...

6. Location:

Inside, outside, on floor, table; level or slopping surface; in role play area, adjacent to sister activity e.g.: Set up as a rock pool next to climbing frame transformed into a lighthouse.

1. Source

Inside taps, outside tap, hose, visit from fire engine, rain, snow.

5. Equipment:

Bottles, funnels, sieves, tea strainers, crockery, colanders, cooking utensils, washing-up equipment, sponges, flannels, syringes, straws, balloons, inflatable toys (small). Small world: Boats, people, buildings, animals, plants etc..., construction kits e.g.: Lego, Stickle Bricks. (Some that will/won't float) number/letter shapes, ducks (colour that changes with temp) marble run.

Story Scene e.g.: 'The Rainbow Fish'
(by Michael Pfister). Shapes, irregular shapes, tubes, natural materials, guttering, junk, indelible markers, washable markers, fabric, cotton wool, underwater treasures (metal, pot, coins, odds and ends), balls, marbles, dolls, baby dolls, dolls clothes, wellies, raincoats, umbrellas, rain hats, waterproof sheeting (for outdoor water play) rocks, plastic fish/plants/flowers/fruit, musical instruments, hose attachments, sprinkler, watering can, trigger spray bottles or just hands and feet!

z. Temperature

Hot, cold, warm, frozen (ice or snow).

3. Additives

Bubbles (shampoo, washing-up liquid) cooking oil, sand, scented oils, paint (colour options make a huge difference and paint is opaque) food colouring (this is transparent) compost, glitter, sequins, bark chippings, leaves, gravel, stones, chopped up newspaper, soap flakes.

4. Container:

Water trough, guttering, canal system (e.g. Brio) tough spot, washing up bowl, baby bath, paddling pool, sink, buckets, tea tray, crockery, or outside straight onto grass, hard standing etc... Hanging rack over container to give height and gravity opportunities.

It's Raining, It's Pouring!

Have a rain festival! Outside in wet weather gear, stamping splashing in puddles, collecting rain in different sized containers, making dry shelters, mixing muddy puddles, finding where rain collects, building irrigation canals using guttering etc... A hose pipe and sprinkler can be used if it isn't rainy enough, although the fire service might give you a visit if it's arranged in advance!

Drip Dry

Working with water at two levels changes all possibilities of what children can do with pouring, dripping, diverting etc... We decided to put a clothes horse over a tough spot to give children a hanging rack. We also used the clothes horse away from the water tray so guttering could bridge the two. Children could alter the angle of the guttering by raising or lowering it on the clothes horse. We also added spiders and watering cans for Incy-wincy spider and rocks and stones so children could build dams.

Bottomless Pit

Black paint and glitter with a few plastic spiders makes the water tray spooky!

"The Early Years classroom that naturally employs an enquiry-based explorative mode of teaching and learning has great potential..."

(Riley and Savage) 7