Nottinghamshire

# Children's Centre Service

## Play at home

Simple, easy and cheap resources
and play ideas for you to try at home

...giving children
the best start

Nottinghamshire
County Council

# Low cost, fun, play ideas – perfect for early learning!

Children learn more in the first 5 years of life than they do in the rest of it.

They learn to control their bodies, to walk and to talk just by watching, listening and exploring.

A child's first teacher is the person who looks after them the most; mum, dad, grandparents, etc.

Research on what helps children succeed as adults shows that playing with your child is the most important ingredient. The time you spend is more important than the type of toys and how expensive they are.

Raiding your recycling bin and that drawer with bits and bobs everyone seems to have, will give you plenty of things to use for fun activities.

To help you get started we've come up with a few easy ideas for you to try.

# Shaky bottles

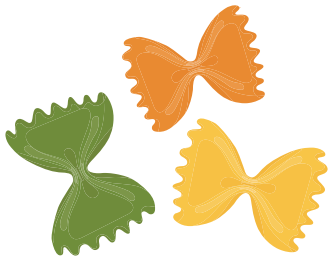
***You will need:***

- Empty, clean bottles with lids
- Bits and bobs from around your house

1. Fill your bottles with 'noisy' items from around the house, e.g. rice, dry pasta, pebbles, beads.

2. Make sure that the lids are on really tight (you can glue them down to be extra safe).

Then don't forget to shake!



# Treasure baskets

***You will need:***

- A container
- Household items

1. Empty your container.

2. Find items from around the house.

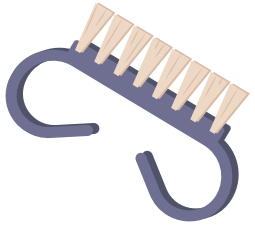
3. Put them in your container.

**Be careful not to include anything:**

- small enough to be swallowed
- pointy
- breakable (like glass)
- sharp

***Ideas for your treasure basket:***

- Jar lids (washed)
- Bangles and bracelets
- Nail brush
- Cloths
- Spoons
- Plastic or tin cups (for camping)
- Curtain tie backs
- Wood or plastic egg cups
- Metal or plastic bowls
- Shower crunchy
- Socks
- Bits of material
- Curlers
- Loofah



***Mix it up a bit:***

**Colour**
Everything in the basket is red or blue.

**Noisy**
Everything in the basket makes a noise.

**Found**
Things you have found out and about, like feathers, stones and pine cones (brilliant for toddlers and older children).

# Sensory socks

***You will need:***

- Socks (sad, lonely, odd socks are perfect)
- Bits and bobs from around your house

1. Fill the sock with objects from around the house, e.g. plastic bottle tops, marbles, pegs, dried lavender, scrunched up greaseproof paper, bells, anything that is interesting to feel, smell or hear.

2. Either sew up the top of the socks or tie them in a knot so your child can't get to the contents.

# Posting box

***You will need:***

- A box
- Scissors
- Pen
- Something round
- Bits and bobs from around your house

1. Draw a circle on top of the box. Cut a big hole in the top of the box.

2. Find objects, any shape, that are small enough to fit through the holes. These could be small balls, building blocks, cars, small dolls, spoons, nail brush, etc...

# Squishy bags

***You will need:***

- Zip lock bags
- Hair gel, baby oil or water
- Glitter, sequins
- Food colouring (if you have it)
- Sticky tape

1. Carefully half-fill your zip lock bag with hair gel, baby oil or water. (If you are using food colouring add and mix it up).

2. Add some small objects or sequins.

3. Use a little sticky tape to put over the zip to avoid it being opened accidentally.

**Always watch your baby** doesn't cover their face with the ziplock bag.

# Pulling box

***You will need:***

- An empty box
- Ribbons, string, wool, etc.
- A bell (optional)
- A pair of scissors

1. Using the scissors carefully poke some holes in the front and back of the box.

2. Drop the bell in the box (if you have one).

3. Tie a knot in one end of the ribbon.

4. Thread through the front and back of your box and then tie a knot in the other end.

5. Repeat until all your holes have ribbon going through them. Close the lid.

# Play dough

***You will need:***

- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 1 cup plain flour
- ½ cup salt
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 cup water
- Few drops of food colouring*
- Few drops of essence for a lovely smell*

**1** Put all the ingredients into a bowl, mix together well.

**2** Mix everything together and knead for 3-4 minutes.

You are now ready to play.

*If you store your play dough in an airtight container it will last for weeks.*

** Food colour and essence are optional.*

# Sorting games

Sorting games are easy to do at home and don't cost anything. Below are some simple ideas:

Sort out the washing into different colours.
Which colour do you like best?

Sort from small to big

Sort rough and smooth things

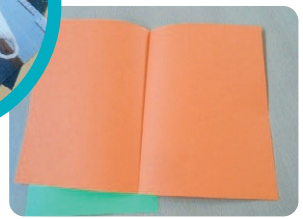
Sort hard and soft

Sort into boxes, cake tins, bags

# Scrap books

***You will need:***

- Pictures or photos
- 2 Sheets of paper
- Glue



1. Fold the paper in half.

2. Glue a line on the fold of one sheet of paper.

3. Stick this sheet to the other sheet.

4. Glue pictures or photos to each page in your book.

5. Your book is complete.
Talk about the pictures together.

# Water

***You will need:***

- Washing up bowl
- Empty washing liquid bottle
- Jug
- Paint brush
- Bubble bath

1. Fill empty bottle with water.

2. Squirt out the water to make pictures and patterns.

3. Put some water in the washing up bowl with the paint brush.

4. Paint some pictures.

5. Fill the washing up bowl with water.

   Pour water from the jug to the bowl (pour it through a colander, from mug to jug, etc.)

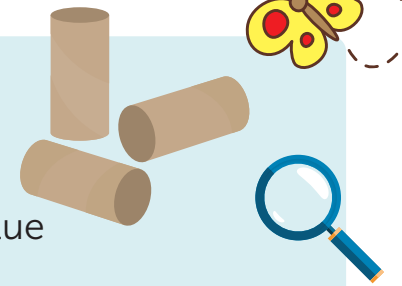
6. Keep the washing up bowl and get some bubble bath and a doll.

   Add a few drops of the bubble bath to the water and swirl around.

   Bath the doll!

**Never leave your little one alone when playing with water.**

# Box building

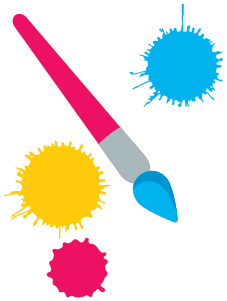


***You will need:***

- Empty boxes
- Tubes
- Masking tape, sellotape or glue
- Empty bottles
  (You can raid your recycling bin but be careful not to use cans as these can have sharp edges)

***Ideas:***

1. Build towers with your boxes and tubes.
2. Stick them together with glue or sellotape.
3. Paint them.
4. Stack them and roll a ball to knock them over.
5. Break a box up and draw a road on it.



# I spy

You don't need anything to play this game. It will help to keep your child entertained on journeys, walking into town, waiting for appointments.

**Rules:**

One person looks around for something that catches their eye eg a tree. They say "I spy with my little eye, something that is green".

Everyone else takes a turn guessing what it is. The one who guesses correctly spies the next time.

You can spy colours, shapes, sizes and the sounds of the beginning of the words. Anything will work.

## Share a book

Just looking at the pictures and saying what's on the page will give hours of cozy fun for you and your little one. It's free to join the library, where you'll find lots of great books and it makes a great trip out.

For more information on your local library take a look at www.inspireculture.org.uk

# Imagination

I am not just a box ...

I am a baby's treasure basket

I am Teddy's bed for the night, tuck him in, tell him a story and sing him a lullaby

I am a pirate's treasure chest, full of buried treasure

I am a doll's house

I am a story box

What else can I be?

# Keep in your cupboard

It's handy if you keep some things around - here's our list of useful things:

- Shoe boxes (good containers)
- Tubs
- Tins
- String
- Ribbon
- Bracelets
- Old hats (for dressing up)
- Old adult T-shirts (make great overalls for messy play)
- Paint brushes
- Washing up liquid bottles (with the lid)
- Interesting boxes for modelling
- Odd socks
- Sequins/confetti (adult supervision is needed)
- Old saucepans, frying pans, sieves, colanders, wooden spoons - great for drumming and playing in the garden
- Used Christmas, birthday cards and coloured paper

**More play and early learning ideas:**
www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk/athome

**Learning to talk:**
www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk/start-talking

**Childcare choices and funding:**
www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk/childcare

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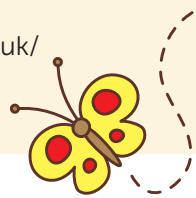
Services for Nottinghamshire parents to be and families with under 5s.

Pop in to see us at one of our buildings, phone or email us, or fill in an online request for services.

**More information:**
www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/childrenscentreservice



# Make playtime a great time!

Children's brains are like little sponges, soaking up everything around them.

Kids love it when you chat, play and read with them. And it sets them up nicely for school.

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