

Parent Guide



@twinklparents

We are excited to share this content with you. If you are interested in finding more resources made especially for Parents, then check out these links to different areas of the **Twinkl Parents** hub.

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What is this resource and how do I use it?

Let your baby or toddler fully immerse themselves in exploratory play with a summer-themed busy tray. With a busy tray, you can take your little one to the beach, visit an ice cream parlour or even make your own summer jellies. Treat them to a fun-filled summer sensory adventure while in the comfort of your own home or garden.

What is the focus of this resource?

Busy Trays

Topic Knowledge - Summer

Fine Motor Skills

Messy Play

Further Ideas and Suggestions

If your little one loves messy play, check out our **Summer Sensory Play** ideas for further inspiration. For some inexpensive ways to make the most of your baby's first summer, read our **Summer on a Budget** guide. Treat your baby to some delicious holiday treats with our **Summer Weaning Recipes**.

Parents Blog



Parenting Wiki



Parenting Podcast

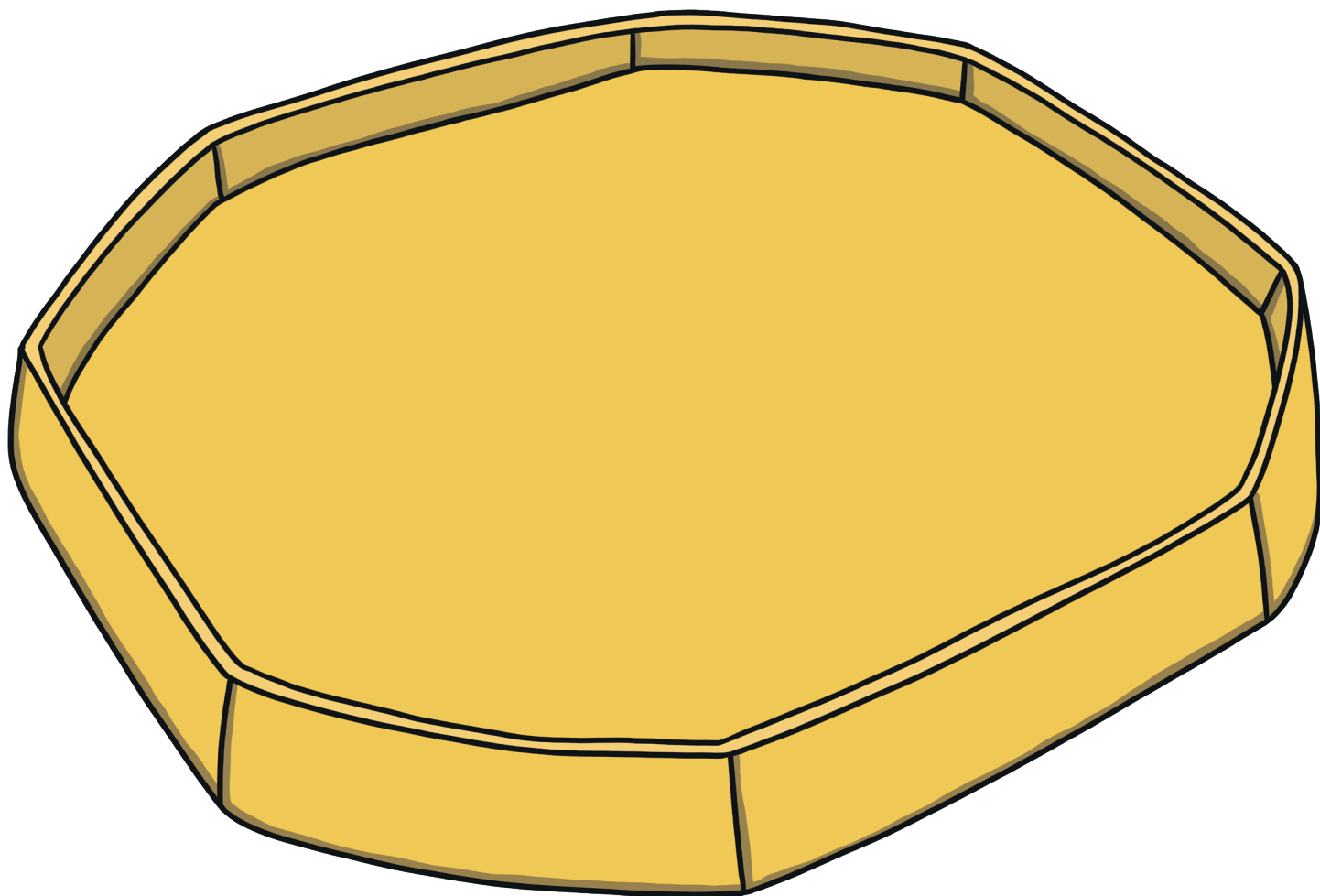


Parents Hub

Busy Trays for Summer

What Is a Busy Tray?

A busy tray can be used to enjoy messy play activities with babies and toddlers. They have gained lots of popularity in nurseries, playgroups and schools, but are also great for the home too!



Busy Trays for Summer

Why Is a Busy Tray Great for Messy Play?

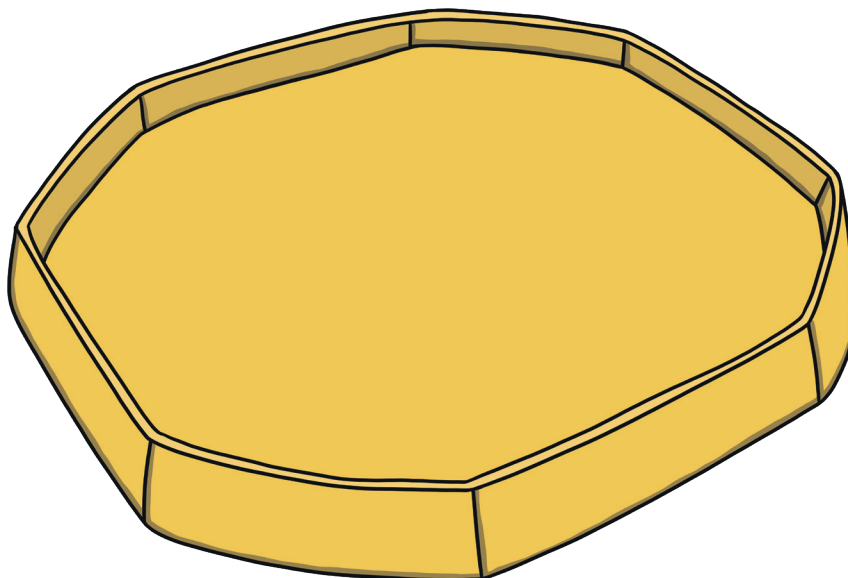
A busy tray is big enough to contain all the mess your baby or toddler makes as they explore the sensory materials you prepare for them.

Not many trays are large enough that your baby or toddler can sit within it, but with a busy tray they can! This means they don't just have to explore with their hands but with other parts of their body too.

A busy tray is big enough to contain all the mess your baby or toddler makes as they explore the sensory materials you prepare for them.

Whether indoors or outdoors, busy trays can be a great addition to your play space. Busy trays have so many uses; they can double up as shallow paddling pools or sand pits in the warmer months. On a rainy day, a busy tray can easily be transformed into a ball pit. Alternatively, create a construction site by pouring all your little one's toy building blocks onto it.

They are large enough for your baby or toddler to enjoy some messy play while playing alongside other children. Invite a couple of friends over and enjoy a fun-filled play date in your house or garden.





Busy Trays for Summer



How Can I Keep My Baby or Toddler Busy with Messy Play?

Messy play activities are ideal for babies from six months of age, once they are able to sit unaided.

Babies and toddlers are increasingly curious at this age and messy play allows them to explore new textures using all of their senses. Taste-safe ingredients are commonly used as little ones often like to explore with their mouths.

Plan your messy play activity at a time that is right for you and your baby or toddler - not too close to meal times or when they might be due a nap.

Set up the messy play activity ready for your little one to discover and explore. Let them take the lead, but be there to guide them along the way.

These summer messy play activities can be enjoyed either indoors or outdoors. If you are enjoying some playtime on a warm summer's day, try to avoid the midday sun; a nice shady spot in the garden may be ideal.

You may want to strip your baby down to their vest or nappy before commencing play. Their swimsuit may be ideal for any messy play activities that involve water.

Try not to worry too much about the mess! The play benefits certainly make the mess worthwhile. If you wish, use old sheets or blankets to lay down on the floor before setting up your activity.



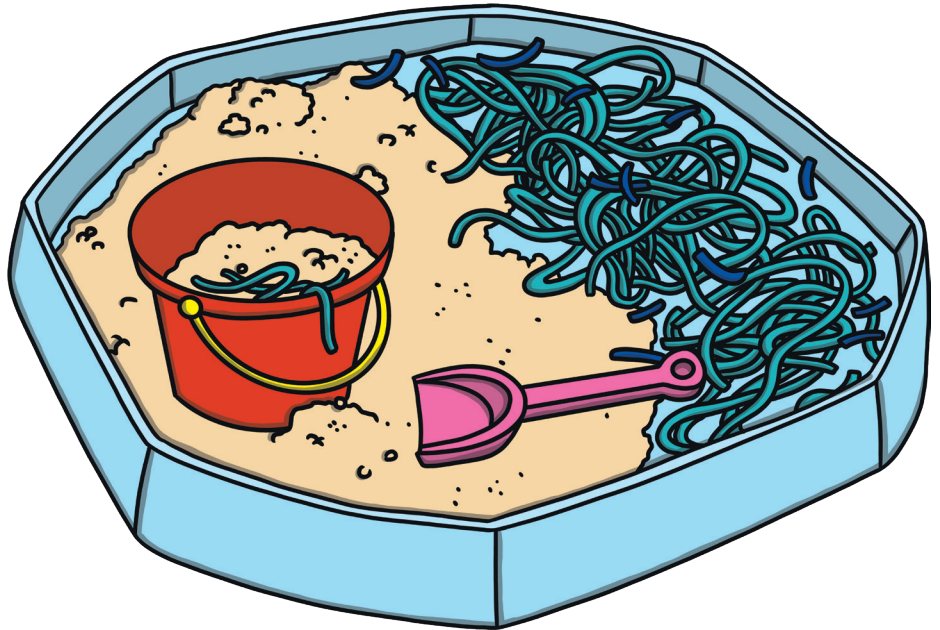
Beach

Busy Tray



You Will Need:

- flour
- vegetable oil
- blue fabric
- cooked spaghetti
- vegetable oil
- blue food colouring
- toy buckets and spades
- busy tray



How to Make the Beach:

To make the sand for your beach busy tray, create a batch of taste-safe cloud dough. Cloud dough is a brilliant sensory ingredient for babies and toddlers, particularly if they enjoy exploring with their mouth. Pour one cup of vegetable oil into a large bowl and add eight cups of flour. Mix the oil and flour with your hands, combining the ingredients until you form a sand-like consistency. Pour your cloud dough into your busy tray and spread thinly to cover half of the tray's surface.

How to Make the Sea:

Use blue fabric and dyed spaghetti to make a sensory sea in the other half of the busy tray (these are two very different sensory materials that your little one will love exploring!). For the fabric, why not use blue sensory scarves? Lay your chiffon scarves out flat, covering as much of the remaining empty space as possible.

To turn your cooked spaghetti blue, coat the strands with a touch of oil before adding a few drops of blue colouring. Mix your spaghetti with your blue food colouring before leaving to dry for 15 minutes. Once dry, scatter your blue spaghetti on top of the blue fabric to complete your sea.

Playtime

Leave a few toy buckets and spades ready for your baby or toddler to play with, just like they would on a real beach. Encourage your little one to fill their bucket with sand; cloud dough can be moulded therefore sandcastles are a possibility! They may just enjoy exploring all the various sensory materials with their hands and feet. If they want to literally dive onto their own little beach, a busy tray is big enough for that to happen.



Ice Cream

Busy Tray



You Will Need:

- cornflakes
- whipping cream
- mixing bowl
- electric hand mixer
- spatula
- wafer cones
- plastic ice cream scoops
- plastic bowls
- plastic spoons
- busy tray



How to Make the Cone:

To make your very large cone, simply sprinkle lots of cornflakes into the centre of your busy tray before rearranging to make a cone shape.



How to Make the Ice Cream:

Pour your whipping cream into a mixing bowl and whisk with an electric hand mixer until stiff peaks begin to form. Then, use a spatula to top your large cornflake cone with plenty of cream. If you would rather, squirty cream straight from the can also works well.



Playtime

Before your baby or toddler dives in, leave some items around the outside of the tray that they can use to fully investigate their sensory ice cream. This could be wafer cones to fill with cream or plastic bowls to make their very own ice cream sundaes. Don't forget plastic spoons or scoops; great utensils for exploring while practising their fine motor skills.



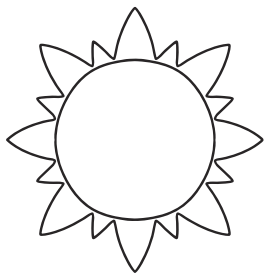
Sunshine

Busy Tray



You Will Need:

- natural full-fat yogurt
- yellow food colouring
- mixing bowl
- paintbrushes
- busy tray

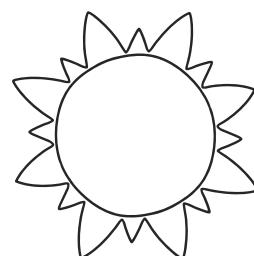
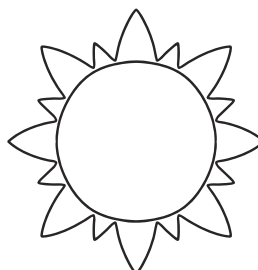
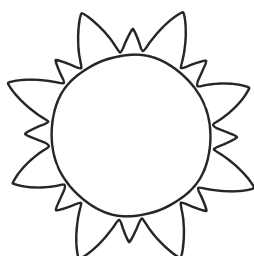
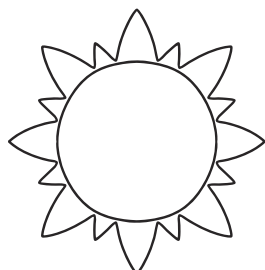


How to Make the Sunshine:

Edible paint is a great way to introduce your baby or toddler to a messy art activity without the fear of them trying to eat the paint; yogurt paint is perfectly taste-safe. Simply pour some natural full-fat yogurt into a mixing bowl before adding drops of yellow food colouring. Stir your ingredients together until you create a vibrant yellow colour. Pour your yogurt into the centre of the busy tray using a paintbrush to create your circular sun. You may even choose to cream some sunshine rays using the same paintbrush.

Playtime

Arm your little one with their very own paintbrush before letting them explore their giant sunshine. They can use their paintbrush to swirl the yellow paint around the busy tray. Your baby or toddler will enjoy making their very own marks to add to the tray. To extend their play even further, toddlers may enjoy creating marks with other art materials such as sponges or roller brushes. They could even use halved potatoes to print their own little sunshines.

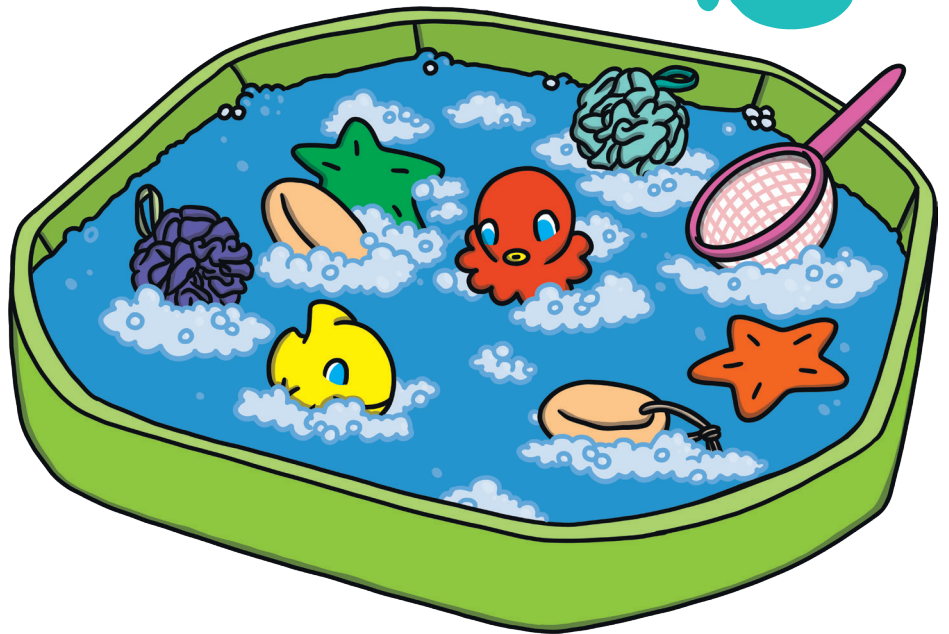


Under The Sea

Busy Tray

You Will Need:

- water
- blue food colouring
- baby bubble bath
- sea creature bath toys
- sponges
- loofahs
- toy fishing net
- busy tray

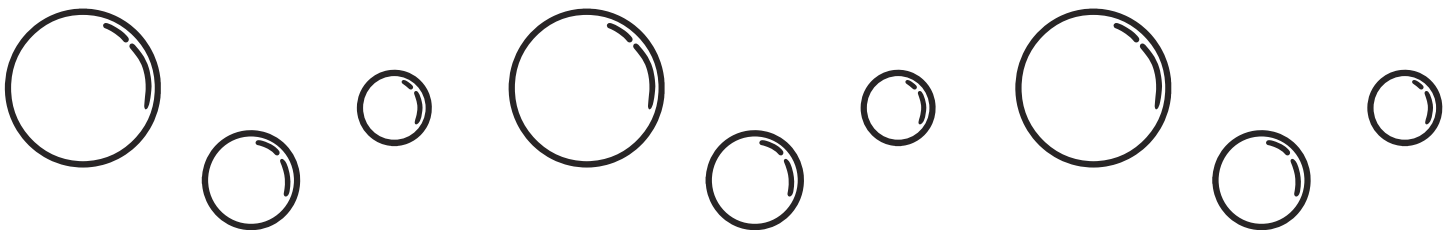


How to Make the Sea:

To prepare your sea, simply add some bubble bath solution into a bucket before adding water straight from the tap. Add a few drops of blue food colouring and mix before pouring your sea into the busy tray. Carefully position a few sponges and loofahs within the busy tray to look like colourful rocks. Finally, add a few sea creature bath toys to the sensory sea; a few of these could even be perched on the sponges or loofahs.

Playtime

There aren't many babies or toddlers who don't enjoy water play and this activity is perfect for those warm summer months! As this activity is rather like a shallow paddling pool, this type of messy play is best suited for the garden. Fully anticipate that your little one may even leap into the sea themselves, although they can still have lots of fun if they choose to explore from the side too. Give them a toy fishing net and see how many different sea creatures they can find, or perhaps they would prefer exploring with a few cups or jugs?

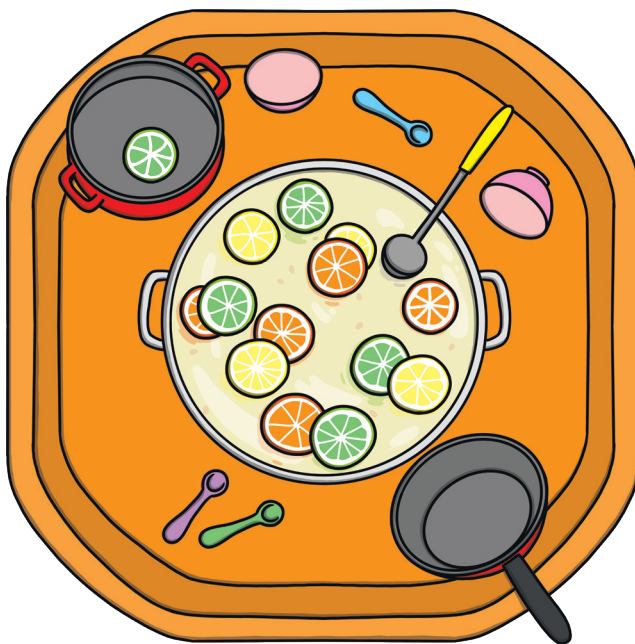
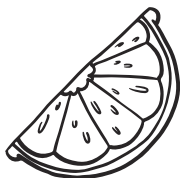


Summer Jelly

Busy Tray

You Will Need:

- slices of lemon, orange and lime
- lemon jelly
- a large shallow bowl
- utensils (e.g. a wooden spoon or ladle)
- pots and pans
- plastic bowls and spoons
- busy tray

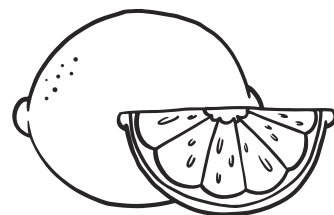
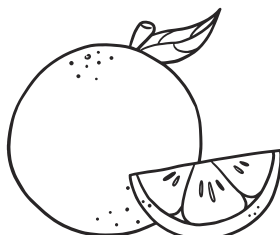
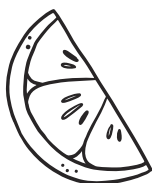


How to Make the Summer Jelly:

Prepare your batch of lemon jelly the night before playing by following the instructions on the jelly sachet packet. Pour your lemon jelly mixture into a large shallow bowl before adding slices of lemon, orange and lime. Leave your mixture to set overnight in the fridge. When ready for playtime, simply remove from the fridge and place the bowl in the centre of your busy tray.

Playtime

Provide your baby or toddler with lots of pots, pans and utensils that they can use to scoop and explore the summer jelly. With so many different sensory textures to explore, they will more than likely want to explore with their hands too. Let them investigate the slimy, slippery texture of the jelly, as well as the feel of the soft, juicy fruit. Your baby or toddler will be fascinated by the different scents and colours; they may even be tempted to give the summer jelly a little taste!



Disclaimers: Sensory activities can engage children in their play and learning, but supervising adults should check for allergens and assess any potential risks (such as the risk of choking from small objects) before the activity, and only proceed if it is safe to do so. We cannot be held responsible for the health and safety of those participating and cannot accept any liability. By using this resource, you acknowledge that it is the responsibility of supervising adults to ensure the safety of children in their care.