



## Water play

Water play is an enjoyable and soothing activity where children can play and learn alone or alongside others. Children can participate at any level with no expected end result or product.

### Water play helps children to:

- Develop hand-eye coordination and the manipulative skills of lifting, pouring, controlling
- Explore the early mathematical and scientific concepts of heavy/light, float/sink, full/empty, shallow/deep, and learn about measuring, estimating, and conservation of volume
- Develop concentration and problem solving skills as they become absorbed in their experimentation
- Develop social skills as they play alongside and communicate with others.

### Setting up the water play area

Water play works well outside or on a sheltered deck or verandah. Placing it near the sandpit can lead to interesting extensions of play.

Bowls or plastic containers may be used although a raised trough is better as it allows several children to play together at the same time and prevents children from climbing in.

On wet days, water can be used inside with a plastic sheet under the water trough. Fine, dry sand or untreated sawdust could be used occasionally instead of water.

### Useful equipment for water play

Use plastic, wood or metal items that will not break or rust, e.g. jugs, sieves, toy boats, mugs, colanders, spoons, bottles, beaters, items for floating and sinking, funnels, watering cans, water wheels, sponges, lengths of hose.

Natural materials are also good, e.g. shells, cones, stones, driftwood, seaweed.

### Children may play with water in the following ways:

- Patting, drinking and splashing the water
- Scooping, pouring, tipping
- Experimenting with containers, such as sieves, sponges, funnels, and water wheels.

### Adults can help

- Good supervision is essential for safety
- Ensure children are protected from the sun with hats and/or sunscreen
- Add warm water on cold days
- Add colour or soap flakes for extra interest.



### Ideas to help with literacy and numeracy

- Talk with children about what is happening. Use words like: full/empty/half full; sink/float; heavy/light; wet/dry
- Encourage the children to ask questions, explore, and predict what will happen.