

- ☆ plastic Happy Meal toys, Mardi Gras necklaces, rubber fishing lures, marbles, Ping-Pong balls
- 2. Check your local dollar store for many of these items, as well as your own ideas.

☆ Tracie O'Hara, Charlotte, NC

Seasonal "Sand"

Materials

Sand and water table or large plastic bins • newspaper • cotton balls • non-toxic Styrofoam pieces • shredded wrapping paper • colored aquarium gravel • birdseed • leaves, grass, and twigs • small buckets or cups • shovels and scoops • small dump trucks and cars • plastic figures

What to do

1. Each month or whenever you wish, vary the children's sand and water play by switching the contents. Use classroom themes or seasonal topics to help determine what to use. For example:
 - ☆ September: Fill the table with fall leaves and add forest critters to hide in the leaves. The children can use small toy garden rakes, scoops, dump trucks, and so on to move the leaves around.
 - ☆ October: Fill the table with spiders and pieces of yarn (webs). Again the children can use the shovels, scoops, buckets, and small boxes to move the spiders around.
 - ☆ November: Put in non-toxic Styrofoam and buckets. Add small toy fruit and vegetables for children to gather for Thanksgiving.
 - ☆ December: Shredded, colorful wrapping paper is fun. The children can use cars, people, and small toys to scoop and fill cups, trucks, and buckets. Cars can be driven through the cardboard tube "tunnels."
 - ☆ January: Cotton balls are great. When finished using them in the table, bring them to the art table and encourage the children to make snow or cloud pictures.
 - ☆ February: Fill the table with foam hearts. These can be purchased in large bags or cut from sheets of foam.
 - ☆ March: Add green aquarium gravel. Hide "gold" pieces in the gravel and encourage the children to hunt for "leprechaun gold."

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- ☆ April: Fill the table with water and water animals, fish, and ducks. Add squeeze bottles, measuring cups, and wide plastic tubes for fish to “swim” through.
 - ☆ May: Fill the table with potting soil that is free of fertilizer/chemicals. Add toy worms and insects. Let the children use magnifying glasses to look for bugs. When finished, use soil for planting.
 - ☆ June: Fill the table with beach sand; add shells, beach critters, buckets, and shovels.
2. Additional ideas include using crushed ice (use with waterproof mittens); adding space figures and spaceships to sand (to make a “moon” surface); and adding small boxes with lids for children to fill.
- Author’s Note:** All of the above ideas are non-food items. It is my personal preference not to use food to “play with,” if possible.

☆ Maxine Della Fave, Raleigh, NC

Sink or Float- With a Dash of Salt

Materials

Small buckets or tubs • water • salt • variety of objects that may sink or float

What to do

1. This water play activity teaches an important science lesson: salt water is denser (“heavier” or “thicker” are the words children may use) and can suspend a greater weight.
2. Pour plain water in the bucket.
3. Encourage the children to drop in provided objects. Record which float and which sink.
4. Now remove the objects and add one cup of salt.
5. Ask the children to drop in one object at a time. Remember to take time before each item is added to let the children predict what will happen based on the previous trial.
6. After all the items have been dropped in, add more salt and repeat.