

Treasure Baskets

Q. Why use a treasure basket?

Treasure baskets are used to encourage babies and young children to learn through touch, taste and sound. It is a very simple idea that encourages children to explore new objects, promotes curiosity and develops confidence.

Treasure baskets encourage your child to reach for objects and allows them to explore and investigate each item. They have many benefits for your child, including stimulating their senses, developing concentration, motor skills and their imaginations. They also encourage children to make connections, compare and categorise items.

Q. What are treasure baskets and how do I use them?

It is essentially a basket of household items (some of which you will have lying around the house) that babies and young children find interesting. It is a very simple activity that you can do with your child.

Choose a low-level basket or container and fill it with household objects and items made from natural materials that vary in weight, size, texture, colour, smell and taste.



You may choose to theme your basket to maintain interest in this activity over time. For example, one week you may put together a 'kitchen' basket with cooking utensils, pans, sieves and pots, the next week you may put together a 'nature' basket with pine cones, crinkly leaves, sea shells, large stones and conkers. Other themed ideas include food baskets, noisy baskets and soft baskets.

Once you have filled your basket, place it next to your baby/child and let them familiarise themselves with the items inside. Allow them to pick things from the basket themselves rather than choosing items for them. This way you can find out what appeals to them most - is it something that makes a loud noise or an item that is shiny?

Make sure you sit near your child and offer reassurance through eye contact and gestures to show them that they are safe but also that you are interested in what they have chosen to select. Most importantly, always watch your child at

Dr Sarah McIntosh (Senior Educational Psychologist at One Education)
Adoption Psychology Service working on behalf of Adoption Counts.

all times while they are playing with the treasure basket to ensure they do not choke on small items.



Objects you may include:

Wood	Metal	Natural objects
Curtain rings	Egg whisks	Pine cones, conkers
Napkin rings	A triangle	Feathers, leaves
Bowls	Sieves	Loofahs
Cotton reels	Bangles	Pieces of fur
Spoons	Small tins	Paint /make-up brushes
Dolly pegs	Tea strainers	Toothbrush
Bracelets	Spoons	A ball of wool, ribbon
Egg cups	Chains	Sponges
Spatulas	Bowl	Corks
Small rolling pins	Potato mashers	Pumice stones
		Smooth stones
		Shells
		Crinkly paper, Foil
		Coconut shell

Q. When to introduce a treasure basket?

Babies and young children of all ages can appreciate the sensory delights of a basket, as long as it contains age-appropriate objects. For example, babies from 3 months will enjoy watching a jar roll to and fro (fill it with beads, pasta, glittery water or anything that makes noise to enhance their experience) whilst a 10 month old may enjoy using a wooden spoon to bang saucepans. Furthermore, an older toddler may enjoy exploring objects that can be stacked and an older child may enjoy making their own nature basket with items from the garden.

It is important to get the timing right and not to introduce the basket when your child is tired or hungry. It is also helpful to change and move the items around in the basket to maintain their interest in the activity.

Dr Sarah McIntosh (Senior Educational Psychologist at One Education)
Adoption Psychology Service working on behalf of Adoption Counts.