

# SENSORY SENSATIONS



## Fun with Tongs



This experience engages children's hand and finger dexterity as they use tongs to pick up and move small items. It particularly engages the senses of sight and touch as children manipulate the tongs and objects.

### WHAT YOU NEED:

- A pair of kitchen tongs.
- An egg carton, muffin tray or small bowls.
- A small tray.
- A variety of objects from around the house:
  - **for toddlers** - larger or textured items that could be easily gripped with tongs such as pom poms, gum nuts, small blocks, or a kitchen sponge cut into cubes.
  - **for pre-schoolers** - smaller beads, bottle tops, buttons, dried beans. The smaller the object, the more challenging the task.
- A towel for defining the play space.



### WHAT YOU COULD DO:

- Place a towel on a table or the floor, so everything is easy to tidy up when finished.
- Spread the objects onto the tray.
- Using the tongs, the child can pick up one object at a time and place it into the egg carton, or muffin tray.
- Younger or less experienced children are likely to use both hands to manipulate the tongs to begin with or pick up an item in their free hand to then secure with the tongs.
- Children will become more proficient with practice and as they gain strength.
- If the task is too difficult to begin with, use larger objects.

### WHAT LEARNING IS HAPPENING?

- This experience strengthens the muscles of the hands, arms and shoulders that are needed for later, writing developing eye-hand coordination and wrist and hand control.
- Persistence and concentration are encouraged with this challenging and occasionally frustrating task.
- Incidentally, vocabulary is enhanced, and maths concepts of classification are reinforced through conversations about texture, size, colour, shape and number.



### WORDS OR PHRASES TO USE:

- Tongs can be tricky to use, you are trying so hard.
- Oh, that was really great, you nearly had it. Try again.
- Sometimes you'll drop the object. That's OK, just try again.
- You did it, have another go.
- Maybe we could put all the red ones together.

### WHERE TO NEXT?

- The tongs could be used outside to pick up leaves or stones.
- Place items into a plastic bottle with a wide neck.
- Play a turn-taking game and tell each other which object to pick up with the tongs and where to put it.
- Pre-schoolers can be encouraged to use the tongs in one hand. This will support the development of hand preference.
- Large tweezers, smaller tongs or children's chopsticks (which are joined at the upper end) could be alternatives.

