

# 365 Ways to PLAY

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PLAY EVERY DAY PROJECT

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Included in this printable are 365 ideas to engage and/or encourage play. These were inspired by the PLAY every day project on Bambini Travel ([www.bambinitravel.com](http://www.bambinitravel.com)) The focus is on simple play ideas with primarily materials that you can find around your home. The ideas are divided up into sections to help you find something fun to fit your day and needs.

Print them out and put them somewhere you can refer to them quickly when you need a little inspiration. I hope you enjoy! Erin

# Playful Environment Ideas

These are ideas of materials to add to your play space or toy shelf to encourage different kinds of play. This includes ways to tweak your environment and new things to rotate into your play space.

1. Blocks & Little People
2. Winter Hats and Mittens Pretend Play Basket
3. Add a book or two to the block area for inspiration
4. Put out a Cardboard Box and some creative supplies
5. Baskets of Flashlights
6. Put a basket of toys under a table and see what happens
7. Empty spice jars and other small containers and small loose parts
8. Dolls & Small Blankets
9. Create a small world or a dollhouse for pretend play (search Pinterest for inspiration)
10. Blocks and Cars or Trucks
11. DIY lacing cards with cardboard, hole punch, and ribbon
12. Sunglasses in a basket
13. Basket of yarn balls
14. Basket with Toilet Paper rolls, paper towel rolls, empty tape rings
15. Basket of hair rollers to nest and explore
16. Swim suits and goggles for Pretend Play
17. Basket of circles. Bottle caps, cardboard circles, rings, etc
18. Basket with calculator and paper and pen or pencil
19. Basket of shiny objects. Rings, silver bowls, whisks, etc
20. Basket with pictures of different expressions and a mirror
21. Make a song basket with props to sing a familiar song like Old MacDonald or 5 Little Ducks and a basic instrument or 2
22. Muffin tins with pasta and pompoms with tongs
23. Put a basket of trucks or trains in a different spot. Under a table? On a window ledge?
24. Borrow a picture book with CD from the library (get an extra copy of the book for each kid)
25. Add crayons and large sheet of paper to the block area
26. Nuts and bolts fine motor basket
27. Clipboards with paper and pens to your block or pretend area
28. Simple drawn or computer printed menus to your play food area
29. Make Mailboxes for Family Members with boxes
30. Collect caps from bottles of water, Gatorade, squeeze pouches etc + use for sorting or patterning

31. Basket with old cell phones
32. Fabric square basket with different textures
33. Basket of brushes. Nail, paint, make up, etc
34. Wood basket with blocks, spoons, chop sticks, rattle, etc
35. DIY sensory bottles. Search Pinterest for ideas but the basic idea is to engage the senses.
36. Basket of Loose Parts added to your block area
37. Basket of soft and hard items for sorting.
38. Buttons and shoe string lacing basket
39. Empty seed packets, pots, and gardening tools for pretend play
40. Recycled Food Containers to Play Kitchen
41. Old grown up clothes for pretend play
42. Purses and other bags for pretend play
43. Empty box in play space with crayons. The bigger the better.
44. Balancing basket: rope, string, and/or chalk to practice
45. Add a box of real Band-Aids to vet or doctor supplies
46. DIY upper/lowercase letter match with empty Easter egg halves
47. Photos of friends and family in a basket. Practice names or make up stories
48. Muffin tins and loose parts like pompoms, rocks, buttons, etc.
49. Loud and quiet basket for playing and sorting.
50. Basket with toilet paper rolls and pinecones
51. Make a basket of items with a letter A and items that start with A. Rotate to different letters.
52. Wrapping paper and bow collage invitation.
53. Basket or Tray of Small Blocks and Squares of Foil
54. Cover a wall with paper and attach some crayons with string
55. Scrabble or other letter tiles in your writing area
56. Tape lines & Cars or Trucks
57. Contact paper sticky side out taped to a window/wall – stick a toy to it to get your child started
58. Basket with Post It Notes and Pens or Pencils
59. Cover your block area floor with paper and put out some markers
60. Storytelling basket with a familiar book and props to retell the story

# Ways to Make Chores & Routines Playful

Chores and routines are a part of our every day. When you do the same things all the time they can get monotonous and often this is when whining starts. Head off the boredom with these playful ideas.

61. Have a kitchen dancing party
62. Race to get seatbelts on. First one gets to pick the music. (or put shoes on or hats, etc)
63. Teach your child how to wash the windows with spray bottle and wash cloth. Fun and helpful.
64. Race to see who in your family can brush their teeth the slowest
65. Have your child sort silverware or order measuring spoons while you prepare a meal
66. Can your child collect a rainbow at the store with different items in your cart?
67. Make silly cereal combinations for each other this am
68. Make your own snack mix together with different cereals, nuts, etc.
69. Pretend to be your favorite farm animal while you walk to the car or mailbox today
70. Test your markers to see what has dried out while you sort them by color and create a rainbow.
71. Try doing things as slowly as a sloth and then maybe as fast as a cheetah.
72. Pick a silly accent and only talk in that voice until the chore is done
73. Listen to a book on tape while you cook together
74. Count things. How many bites to eat your toast? How many times you jump while Mom stirs?
75. Fill a Ziploc bag with post it notes, markers, and stickers. Put in your bag for next time you need to wait.
76. Transition walking backwards everywhere this morning
77. Fill a mixing bowl with pom poms or other small objects and set measuring scoops next to it for your child to play with at the table or counter while you cook.
78. Make a kitchen rock band while you cook. Music, bang on bowls, shake boxes of rice, etc.
79. Put on a favorite song and see if you can finish cleaning up your room before it is over!
80. Let your child slice eggs, strawberries or mushrooms with the egg slicer while you cook.
81. Read aloud during meal time
82. Balance on one foot while you brush your teeth or stand on your tip toes
83. High five each other every time you find a sock match or get up and do a happy dance
84. Crawl up the stairs to nap
85. Draw faces on fruit peels before you peel and eat
86. Practice sweeping up using a dust pan with large objects like blocks
87. Tiptoe to the car and try to get ready super quietly so you don't walk up the car!
88. Count items as you unload the grocery bags
89. Make up a song about your vegetables while you cook or eat them. Twinkle twinkle little peas?

# Ways to Play Inside

These are a variety of ways to play together inside. Many of these things could be done outside as well, but they work well inside while not everything does.

90. Read aloud.
91. Balance on a Tape Line
92. Cut out some huge dinosaur feet and lay out a trail for your child to follow to a surprise
93. Dance with Shower Curtain Links & Ribbons
94. Pretend your couch is an island
95. Play memory with 2 decks of cards. Use only one suit for younger kids.
96. Build a Fort
97. Read in a tent or fort.
98. House count. How many windows are in your home? Door knobs? Chairs?
99. Set up a pretend shoe shop
100. Pipe cleaners and strainer
101. Hide shoes around the house or playroom and play find the pair. Most pairs matched wins.
102. Gather empty tissue boxes and make mailboxes for family members.
103. Pretend to be sick, your child is the doctor and they need to make you all better
104. Make a color themed fruit salad – or red, white and blue for the Fourth
105. Find something in the recycling bin to create with
106. Start a spoon clapping marching band
107. Play I-Spy with your toys
108. Paper Towel or wooden spoon microphones and take turns performing favorite songs
109. Find everything blue in your house...or red?
110. Empty tissue box as sensory feel box. Pairs of objects inside and find pairs by touch, no peeking.
111. Make a ramp w/board or cardboard & see what rolls down the quickest
112. Roll a soft ball back and forth
113. Lace cheerios onto string for snack today
114. Play restaurant
115. Google “preschool rain song” and learn a song about rain on a rainy day
116. Basket of keys
117. Trike or bike “car” wash
118. Basket of measure cups and buttons
119. Use a cardboard box as a boat or a train
120. Bake muffins together
121. Basket of pompoms with different sized containers
122. Make a cave and pretend to be dinosaurs or bears
123. Hide and Seek
124. Practice scooping and pouring with simple water and measuring scoop invitation
125. Set up a pretend ice cream shop
126. Put on a puppet show
127. Set up a pretend coffee shop

128. Empty Easter eggs and loose parts
129. Make words or ID letters with scrabble tiles
130. Balancing Competition with Timer or Stopwatch
131. Do a puzzle together
132. Go on a rainbow scavenger hunt (outside too!)
133. Make a train, bus, or car with chairs and go on a pretend trip
134. Family board game night
135. Act out a favorite book
136. Ziploc bag filled with paint
137. Camp in living room (even if just for the afternoon)
138. Hide construction paper hearts and go on a hunt
139. Bake together
140. Dish towel bandanas, toilet paper roll spy glasses and a bed for a boat. Sail away pirates!
141. Make a number line
142. Hide snack and make a map for your child to use to find it
143. Play hide and seek with cards from a memory game and make pairs
144. Build bridges for your play cars
145. Collect heavy things from around the house and then figure out which is the heaviest
146. Make popsicles or flavored ice cubes together
147. Create an up and down obstacle course
148. Play Simon Says
149. Plant seeds. Check on weekly and draw if interested.
150. Play catch with a pair of balled socks
151. Dolls and pretend food
152. Make a Graham Cracker or Gingerbread house
153. Read a book in the closet with a flashlight
154. Train ride yoga
155. Take a long mid-day bath just to play for fun
156. Pretend your pillows are rocks that you need to hop between to get over a river
157. Bows Basket – babies can explore, toddlers can sort, preschoolers can pattern.
158. Have an indoor lunch picnic on the floor
159. Laundry basket boat. Bonus points if you make a fishing pole (paper towel roll & string)
160. Flashlight letter or color or sight word hunt

# Invitations to Create

Technically this list could be included in the indoor section, but these are specifically creative ideas. They are ways to create together and playful things to lay out to encourage your child to play and create.

161. Create with Tape
162. Playdough and Popsicle Sticks
163. Start a Rainbow Colors Book
164. Create with chalk on black paper.
165. Decorate a tin can to hold markers or crayons
166. Toilet paper rolls and stickers and markers to decorate
167. Letter Basket with Paper, Pens and Stamps (aka stickers)
168. Make an orange collage (or another color)
169. What can you make with toothpicks and marshmallows or grapes
170. Rainbow color contact paper collage.
171. Stamp paint with blocks
172. Make robots with collage materials and tin cans
173. Build with packing peanuts and a little bit of water (or glue)
174. Playdough and cookie cutters
175. Cut out squares and circles. Sort. Create. Glue.
176. Rainbow colored Lego invitation
177. Rainbow Crayons color. Rubber band several crayons together to use all at one time.
178. What can you make with cardboard, duct tape, and a scissors/knife (w/adult help)
179. Different kinds of tape a huge piece of paper on the wall
180. Create with craft gems and glue
181. Make Secret Message with White Crayons on White Paper & Reveal with Watercolors
182. Leaves and glue or contact paper collage
183. Huge paper on the wall. Stand and paint
184. Make puppets with toilet paper rolls
185. Send a get well or cheer up card to some one
186. Use playdough toys to paint with
187. Help your baby doll do feet painting
188. Paint a big box
189. Bend pipe cleaners into shapes and use for stamps with paint
190. Paint with a fly swatter
191. Cardboard box for cover and piece of paper = blank book
192. Make sunny picture with oranges, reds, and yellows
193. Post it notes and pens
194. Try a hole punch
195. Paint things you find – rocks, shells, sticks
196. Paint with shades of green in springtime
197. Make prints with sliced apples
198. Paint with reds, yellows and oranges in Fall

199. Paint with white on black in Winter
200. Use pictures and paper to make a faces book
201. Paint with sponge or fingernail brush
202. Children's Book open + markers and paper
203. Make paint stamps by cutting sponges into shapes
204. String and tape invitation
205. Use leaves, pinecones, or acorns to paint with instead of brushes
206. DIY tangrams. Square paper. Cut into squares and rectangles. Then, what can you make
207. Heart contact paper window collage
208. Large piece of paper or canvas and red paint. Add another color the next day, then another
209. Create with crayons
210. What can you make with popsicle sticks, glue, and feathers
211. Make cards for holidays and birthdays and send them to friends and family
212. Practice cutting with foam and child scissors
213. Try a new art materials – like dabbers
214. Scissors and strips of paper to cut
215. Tissue paper and contact paper. Cut into shapes to match your child's interest.
216. Card making invitation to create
217. Make prints with potatoes
218. Red, green, and white invitation to create
219. Cut tree shape from contact paper. Sticky side out on window w/ ribbon, tinsel, and bows in a basket on the floor to decorate.
220. Blank books (bought or homemade) and markers and pens
221. Make a collage using old photos of family
222. Make a paper link chain to count down to a holiday or big trip
223. Make prints with bubble wrap
224. Foam and water window art
225. Tape resist painting
226. Qtip painting

# Ways to Play in the Bathtub

The bathtub has long been one of our favorite places to play. Here are some ways to make this space even more enjoyable or to add a little pizzazz to your bath tub routine.

- 227. Boats in the Bathtub
- 228. Baby Dolls or superheroes in the Bathtub
- 229. Cooking tools in the tub
- 230. Lots of sponges for squeezing, floating, and sinking
- 231. Foam blocks in the tub.
- 232. Soapy water and a variety of balls
- 233. Try a sink bath today
- 234. Tea Time in the Tub with Plastic Tea Set
- 235. Bubble bath and whisks
- 236. Cut foam into shapes to stick to sides of the tub
- 237. Ice Cube experimenting in the tub
- 238. Scrub one part (ex legs) really really slooow, and then one part (ex arms) really fast!
- 239. Sing Head Shoulders knees and Toes while you wash up
- 240. Time them. How long can they balance a sponge on their head?

# Playful Sensory Bin Ideas

These are a range of sensory ideas (certainly not exhaustive) that can be done inside or outside in a sensory table or sensory bin (aka large low plastic bin).

- 241. Red object ice block rescue
- 242. Lemonade sensory bin (water and slide lemons. Things to scoop or grasp)
- 243. Shaving cream on a cookie sheet
- 244. Shaving cream and food coloring or liquid watercolors
- 245. Flour and cooking tools in a sensory tub
- 246. Measuring scoops and beans or rice
- 247. Hide pieces of a simple puzzle in beans or rice and search for them to put your puzzle together
- 248. Water, cut pipe cleaner pieces, and magnet wands
- 249. Shredded paper with different items hidden
- 250. Rice and variety containers sensory bin.
- 251. Playdough and pretend animals
- 252. Playdough and toothpicks
- 253. Playdough and pipe cleaners
- 254. Playdough and vehicles
- 255. Playdough, spaghetti and beads
- 256. Yarn, ribbon, and pom pom sensory bin
- 257. Baby dolls or toy car bubble washing sensory table
- 258. Tub with water and let your animals or people go “swimming”
- 259. Water. Bubbles. Whisks.
- 260. Corn Meal and Trucks Sensory Bin Play
- 261. Shaving cream and ice cubes
- 262. Hide scrabble tiles or other letters in rice or beans. Can you build your name?
- 263. Dried beans and construction trucks
- 264. Magnetic and non-magnetic objects and a magnet wand sensory bin
- 265. Make a bin of objects of one color.
- 266. Practice drawing shapes or writing letters in a sand tray
- 267. Make a Bin of 2 different colors to sort and manipulate.

# Ways to Play Outside

Play can happen anywhere and often kids prefer to play outside. These are some fun ideas that work best outside. They range from things you can do on a little strip of grass or cement to mini-adventures to have outside.

268. Spray bottles with Dyed Water and Snow
269. Listen for birds outside or on a hike and try to imitate their calls.
270. Sled or Roll down a hill
271. Decorate paper towel tubes to be spy glasses and bring them on a walk or to the playground
272. Take paints outside
273. Relay races. A paper towel roll works well as a baton
274. Try soccer
275. Go on a flashlight walk in the evening
276. Collect signs of Fall in your neighborhood
277. Play hide and seek at the playground
278. Toddler hopscotch. Circles or hoola hoops in a line for jumping out practice
279. Rainy day kool aid paint. Kool aid in cups outside and let mix with rain to create paint
280. Bucket and ball toss
281. Go on a walk and hunt for the very biggest and very smallest leaves on the block
282. Go for a photography walk
283. Car part count. How many tires? Windows? Steering wheels?
284. Trace your shadows and then paint with chalk
285. Make crayon rubbings of sidewalk, table, tree, etc
286. Make puppets or dolls or superheroes with sticks
287. Jump in a pile of leaves
288. Blow bubbles. Instead of popping them can you blow them up to keep them in the air?
289. Climb a tree or big rock
290. Make a line and then see how far everyone can jump. Measure with older kids
291. Have a parade around the block or house
292. Play a game of tag
293. Hopscotch with letters, shapes or another learning goal
294. Blanket and books outside
295. Blow bubbles with your fingers (shaped like an okay sign) as the bubble wand
296. Freeze watermelon cubes and eat as a snack
297. Play follow the leader
298. Start a collection of rocks, sticks, seashells, etc
299. Set a tent up in the backyard
300. Chalk outside after rain. Draw on the wet sidewalk
301. Explore puddles with cups and bowls
302. See who can make the longest, smallest, or biggest chalk art design
303. Take a Walk – whatever the weather
304. Go for a family bike ride

305. Pop bubbles with different body parts
306. Take a ball to the park and throw, kick or roll down the slide together
307. Practice jumping over sidewalk lines or hopping from one foot to the other
308. Go for a family swing
309. Lay out an obstacle course at the playground
310. Punch a hole in a jar lid and bring outside to hunt for bugs
311. Make a line with chalk or a rope to practice balancing
312. Water and paintbrushes on a hot wall outside
313. Bring toy trucks outside
314. Do yoga outside together
315. Bouncy ball painting
316. Magnify an ant
317. Take your baby dolls for a walk today. Push them in a stroller or wrap them on blanket
318. Eat outside just for fun
319. Crawl, flutter, and jump like different insects or animals
320. Make sand angels or other sand art at the beach or in the sandbox
321. Target practice with chalk targets and beanbags or balls
322. Create an obstacle course and time yourself
323. Host a neighborhood trike race
324. Gather leaves (or rocks or sticks) and sort them by color, shape or size
325. Name hunt. Hide letters for kids' names around yard. They search to spell their name.
326. Find a good muddy spot to explore with sticks and bowls
327. Paint with water
328. Paint over chalk with water
329. Make leaf or flower crowns
330. Do a color scavenger hunt
331. Use a stop watch (or phone timer) to time kids running a distance and then try to beat their time
332. Put on boots and raincoats and splash in puddles
333. Bring journals and markers outside
334. Play catch with a ball
335. Create and Scatter Reindeer Food (oats, glitter, etc)
336. Visit an Outdoor Market
337. Winter Lights Walk. Consider a color or character scavenger hunt.
338. Decorate a tree for wildlife
339. Go on a hunt for the longest stick in the world!

# Ways to Play on the Go

Errands with kids can be tricky but often they are unavoidable. I personally dread the grocery store the most with kids. Whether you are at the doctor's office, waiting in a line, driving around, or braving the grocery store these are some ideas to make these trips a little more fun.

- 340. Play spot a letter or color while you drive
- 341. Find a new fruit or veggie to try at the grocery store.
- 342. Bring a fruit and veggie checklist for your child to use at the grocery store
- 343. Count things. How many chairs? Stop signs? Dogs?
- 344. Listen to a book on tape in the car
- 345. Bring a calculator to play with while you wait
- 346. Try to whisper for a whole car ride
- 347. Look for foods that start with a specific letter (such as B) at the grocery store
- 348. Borrow 3-5 books from a new author at the library
- 349. Transition to the car like Quiet Mice
- 350. Bring finger puppets and make up a story together
- 351. Play I-Spy letters or colors while you grocery shop
- 352. Walk on your tip toes while you walk to the car/inside/ etc
- 353. Sing the ABCs while they wash their hands
- 354. Bring baby dolls along and explain to them what you're doing
- 355. Learn to say hello in a different language and then practice when you see people
- 356. Time them. How long can they balance on one foot while you wait in line? The other foot?
- 357. Tell a story together. Person 1 makes up a first sentence, then person 2 build onto it, etc.
- 358. Count steps as you walk up or lines in the sidewalk as you walk
- 359. Sing if you're happy and you know it in the car...then angry, silly, worried, etc.
- 360. Play Simon Says while you get dressed
- 361. Play follow the leader while you walk somewhere. Be sure to zig and zag
- 362. Sing the Brush Your Teeth song while they Brush their teeth.
- 363. What can you make out of toothpicks or creamer packets, etc at a restaurant?
- 364. Bring a book to read aloud in the waiting room, on the train, etc
- 365. Collaborative drawings. Person 1 draws something, passes paper, person 2 adds something.