

BACKYARD SENSORY DIET ACTIVITIES

From OT Toolbox: <https://www.theottoolbox.com/outdoor-sensory-diet-activities-for-backyard>

Slide down a hill on cardboard
Grass sensory bin

Use a magnifying glass to inspect the grass and dirt

Mud kitchen

Roll down hills

Animal walks with barefeet

Create nature "soup" with grass, flower petals, sticks, etc.

Pick flowers

Cartwheels and tumbling on the grass (barefoot or with shoes!)

Water Table with nature

Cartwheel or tumbling

Target games

Bean bag games

Relay races

Hide and seek games

Simon Says games

Tag

Bell parade

Kazoo sound hunt

Listening for birds or animals

Record backyard sounds and playback the recording. Try to recognize and name the sound and where it was located in the yard.

Fill containers with items from the backyard. Shake plastic containers or even paper bags with the items and see if your child can name the objects.

Play Marco Polo in the yard!

[Auditory backyard games](#) like: Neighborhood Listening Scavenger Hunt, Auditory Hide and Seek, Listening Tag, Noisy Toy Positioning Game

[Create with recycled materials](#) and make arts, crafts, and activities.

Pull plastic ware out of the cupboards and sort the lids onto the containers.

Mix colors with food coloring in water.

Blow bubbles

Jump rope

Play Kickball

Throw a book picnic: grab snacks, a blanket, and a pile of books and head outside.

Dress up with old fancy dresses and clothes from mom's closet (then throw them in a bag and donate!)

Bake

Poke holes in a cardboard box and [push pipe cleaners through the holes](#)

Bowl with recycled plastic waterbottles

Act out a favorite nursery rhyme

Play Pizza Tag: one person is "it" and chases the others. Players run from "it" and can stay safe from being tagged by naming pizza toppings and touching the ground.

Put dollhouses or play sets into a [bin of shredded paper](#).

Play hide and seek

Climb trees

Watch and draw clouds

Tell stories where one person starts a story and each person adds a sentence to continue the story. Write it down and illustrate your story!

Make and deliver lemonade to neighbors

Go birdwatching

Make [creative firefly catchers](#) and then catch the fireflies that night.

Play charades

Act out a favorite book

Create with finger paints (make your own with flour, water, and food coloring or washable paint!)

Sing songs

Turn on music and dance

Pick flowers and give them to neighbors

Make [crafts](#). Have an art show and invite friends.

Create a [spatial concepts map](#)

Spin in circles.

Swing side to side on a swing set.

Hang upside down from swing set equipment.

Swing on a hammock.

Backyard dance party. Encourage lots of whole body movements and spinning.

Cartwheels

Tumbles

Hopscotch

Play Leapfrog

Mini trampoline (or the big sized-trampoline)

Catch a ball while standing, sitting, swinging, rolling a ball, catching between legs, etc.

Hit a tennis racket at a target including bubbles, falling leaves, large balls, small rubber balls, and balloons

Catch butterflies in a net

Bubble pop, including popping bubbles with a toe, knee, foot, head, finger, or elbow
goop

play dough

shaving cream

[backyard messy play date](#)

paper mache

BACKYARD SENSORY DIET EQUIPMENT

Make a bin of outdoor toys that are readily available in your garage or storage area so that sensory play experiences are at your family's fingertips.

Hoola Hoops

Jump Ropes

Balls

Bat

Tennis Racket

Butterfly Net

Baby Swimming Pool

Tarp or Slip and Slide

Water Hose

Scoops and cups

Sidewalk chalk

Bike

Scooter

Skateboard

Cardboard

Target or net

Shovels

Buckets

Play wheelbarrow

Swingset

Climbing structure

Flashlight

Magnifying glass

Cones

Bubbles

Bean bags

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ADDRESSING SENSORY NEEDS IN THE BACKYARD

For kids with sensory needs, it can be overwhelming to have an open space full of sights, sounds, scents, and textures. Honking horns, barking dogs, and other sounds that frequent the backyard or lawn can be too much for the child with sensory sensitivities. Try these accommodations for addressing sensory needs in backyard play:

Wear shoes instead of sandals or bare feet

Proprioceptive input such as firm touch to the shoulders

Calming vestibular sensory input such as side to side or forward-front slow swinging

Throw and play catch with a weighted ball

Bucket of water to rinse hands if child is sensitive to messy hands or dirt

Sheltered area if child is sensitive to wind blowing on skin

Wear a lightweight wind jacket

Hat with brim to reduce bright light or intense light in eyes or on face

Sunscreen with firm touch before going outdoors

Wear sunglasses

Wear headphones to reduce background noise

Be aware of freshly cut grass which has a strong scent

Wear thin gloves for gardening activities

MORE ABOUT OUTDOOR SENSORY DIET ACTIVITIES

Sensory diets and specific sensory input or sensory challenges are a big part of addressing sensory needs of children who struggle with sensory processing issues. Incorporating a schedule of sensory input (sensory diet) into a lifestyle of naturally occurring and meaningful activities is so very valuable for the child with sensory needs.