

Reception EYFS: Autumn Term: Exploring & Settling In	Reception EYFS: Spring Term Purposeful Play & Language Building	Reception EYFS: Problem Solving & Scientific Thinking
Term Focus: Children are introduced to sand and water through sensory experiences, exploring textures, basic concepts like full/empty, and simple tool use. The focus is on developing curiosity, early vocabulary, and confidence in investigating natural materials.	Term Focus: Children begin to explore and compare properties of materials more purposefully, using tools to pour, mould, and observe changes such as melting and flow. They are encouraged to ask questions, solve simple problems, and play collaboratively.	Term Focus: Children apply their knowledge through imaginative and structured play, designing water runs or building in sand. They investigate, predict outcomes, and work with increasing independence and teamwork to create, explore, and tell stories.
Aims: • Introduce sand and water areas. • Support sensory exploration and independent play. • Model appropriate tool use and language.	Aims: • Encourage comparisons and problem-solving. • Introduce descriptive and comparative language. • Develop collaborative play and storytelling.	Aims: • Support investigation and prediction skills. • Extend mathematical and scientific language. • Foster independence in experimenting and hypothesising
Key Vocabulary: • Wet, dry, pour, scoop, fill, empty • Heavy, light, sink, float • Cold, warm, splash, drip	Key Vocabulary: • More, less, heavier, lighter, half, full, nearly empty • Flow, stream, measure, compare • Build, mould, mix, crumble	Key Vocabulary: • Predict, evaporate, dissolve, absorb, observe • Volume, capacity, estimate, record • Structure, collapse, stronger, weaker
Activities & Resources: Sand: • Dry sand only • Buckets, spades, scoops, small world animals • Funnels, rakes, moulds	Activities & Resources: Sand: • Introduce damp/wet sand for building • Create environments (e.g., dinosaur land, mini beach) • Use of containers to compare capacity	Activities & Resources: Sand: • Build bridges, tunnels, and architectural structures • Explore dry vs wet sand for construction • Introduce sieves, scales, and weighing tools

Water: • Pouring and tipping with jugs, bottles, and cups • Squeezable sponges, plastic animals, colanders • Floating and sinking objects	Water: • Add coloured water for sensory exploration • Introduce pipes, tubes, syringes, wheels • Ice play and melting experiments	Water: • Create water flow experiments (e.g., guttering, ramps) • Test materials for waterproofing • Evaporation observations (e.g., leaving wet cloths in the sun)
Enhancements for Continuous Provision: • Add labels to tools and storage areas • Introduce basic measuring tools (small clear containers) • Add natural materials (shells, pebbles)	Enhancements for Continuous Provision: • Add challenge cards (e.g., “Can you fill two cups the same?”) • Incorporate role play (e.g., car wash, potion making) • Add laminated vocab cards and story props	Enhancements for Continuous Provision: • Clipboards and waterproof pens for recording ideas • Simple measuring jugs with ml indicators • Real-world role play additions (e.g., café, science lab)
Assessment Opportunities: • Do children explore textures confidently? • Can they describe what they feel and see? • Are they beginning to use tools appropriately?	Assessment Opportunities: • Do children use comparative language? • Are they working collaboratively on construction or experiments? • Can they explain what they’re doing and why?	Assessment Opportunities: • Are children making predictions and testing ideas? • Can they describe changes and processes observed? • Are they using mathematical vocabulary with confidence?
EYFS Areas of Learning Covered: Understanding the World • Explore and talk about different materials and changes. • Observe natural processes and describe what they see.		

Communication and Language

- Engage in discussions and use topic-specific vocabulary.
- Describe actions and make predictions.

Physical Development

- Use small tools with increasing control.
- Develop coordination when pouring, filling, scooping.

Mathematics

- Explore measures: full/empty, volume, capacity.
- Compare quantities and begin to estimate.

Personal, Social & Emotional Development (PSED)

- Share space and tools; work collaboratively.
- Develop resilience and curiosity.

Prompts and Questions for Adults During Sand and Water Play in EYFS

Encouraging Exploration & Description

- “What does it feel like?”
- “Is it warm or cold?”
- “How does it change when we add water?”
- “What happens when you squeeze it/pour it?”
- “Can you describe what you’re doing?”

Supporting Mathematical Thinking

- “Which container holds the most/least?”
- “Is that full or nearly full?”

- “How many scoops will it take to fill this jug?”
- “What happens if we add more?”
- “Can you make two containers hold the same amount?”

Promoting Scientific Thinking

- “What do you think will happen if we...?”
- “Why do you think it sank/floated?”
- “Can you find something that soaks up the water?”
- “What happened to the ice?”
- “What could we do to stop it from leaking?”

Stimulating Problem Solving & Predictions

- “How can we make the water move from here to there?”
- “How can you stop it spilling?”
- “Can you make the sand stand up?”
- “What could you use to carry more water at once?”
- “What will happen if we leave this in the sun?”

Encouraging Building & Construction

- “What are you making?”
- “How can we make it stronger?”
- “Can you build something tall/wide/deep?”
- “What do you need to finish your structure?”
- “What happened when you used wet sand instead of dry?”

Developing Language & Communication

- “Tell me about what you're doing.”
- “Can you explain your idea to your friend?”
- “What do you call that tool?”
- “What are the steps you're taking?”
- “Who else could help you with that?”

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Supporting Social Interaction

- “Can you take turns filling this?”
- “Who is going to hold the funnel while you pour?”
- “How can we share these tools?”
- “Can you work together to build something?”
- “What could you say to ask for help?”