

Treasure Baskets – suitable for children under 12 months

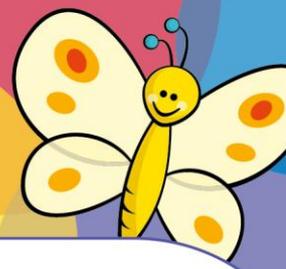
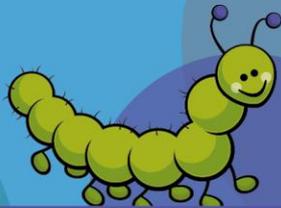


The predominant way that babies under the age of one discover and learn about their world is through sensory motor development, during this stage a baby's primal instinct is to explore objects by handling and mouthing them in order to find out about their physical characteristics. By using a treasure basket with children at this age you are providing them with rich mental stimulation, which not only activates the growth of the brain but also provides richly satisfying experiences for the baby.

We live in a world where plastic toys dominate the shelves of toy shops, but plastic is dull and disappointing for babies, and while each rattle may look different each one smells, tastes and feels the same - it is unstimulating to a baby's senses. Using treasure basket play with babies stimulates all the senses, creating a rich learning experience. The Treasure Basket can be used with babies from the time that they can sit unaided to around 16-18 months, during this phase the primary question a baby would ask if they could talk would be 'What is the object like?'. The Treasure Basket is a ridged low sided round basket filled with 'objects' from the 'real world', these 'objects' are made from any material but plastic, and come from a variety of sources in nature and the around the house. It is through handling and exploring these objects that a baby develops contact with the outside world, and begins to make their own choices and decisions.

For a Treasure Basket to be an effective tool in the play and development of babies, the most important factor is an attentive and calm caregiver, who creates a relaxed atmosphere and is available to the child during their play and exploration. The adult's role in the use of the treasure basket is to sit nearby and be attentive, responsive and unobtrusive - the baby needs to be able to make their own choices about which objects they are going to pick up and how they are going to explore them without interference. To an outsider looking in on a baby exploring a treasure basket, it may appear that the adult is doing 'nothing', but a baby will have a much richer and more stimulating experience, developing confidence and concentration when they can explore at their own pace, without being 'shown' things and 'how' to use them by an adult, as there is no right or wrong way for a baby to explore or use the materials.

Another important factor in the effectiveness of the Treasure Basket as a learning tool, is when, where, how often and how long each 'play session' lasts. The treasure basket should never be left out 24/7 for your baby to play with, as they will soon bore of the objects and become uninterested in them. It is important that the time of day you allocate to a session exploring the treasure basket is when your child is fed, well rested and calm, the environment in which the play session will be must also be calm, turn off the tv, remove any distractions and make sure there is minimum disruption. Ideally each play session should last between 30 minutes to an hour, and a baby should have opportunity to explore the treasure basket every day, but only if all of the conditions are favourable.



The treasure basket comprises of a ridged side round basket and 60-80 different objects. The treasure basket is not a static plaything, over time objects can be added, taken out and replaced, every time you go somewhere new, you can collect objects to go into the treasure basket (e.g. shells from a trip to the beach or pine cones from a visit to the gardens) so that the basket grows, reinforces learning experiences and becomes a catalogue of memories. Every treasure basket will be a unique collection of objects. To make the treasure basket, set aside a couple of days, where your main purpose is to build the foundations of a treasure basket for your child. Aim to establish a collection of 20-30 objects, which comprise a variety of textures and materials. Once you have built up this 'base' of objects to go in your treasure basket, you can add more to it over time, which will keep your baby interested with a new object to explore every now and then, and will take the pressure off you to find all 60-80 objects at once.

Below you will find a list of ideas of objects to collect for your treasure basket:

- **Paper / cardboard objects:** Egg boxes, notebook, sturdy cardboard tubes, greaseproof paper.
- **Wooden objects:** Door wedge, small turned bowl, dolly pegs, egg cup, wooden egg, spoons, curtain rings, coaster, bracelet, block, napkin rings, dowel, empty salt and pepper cellars.
- **Leather, textile, rubber, or fur objects:** Small knitted toy, bean bag, piece of flannel, velvet powder puff, bags of herbs, bag of lavender, leather key ring, coloured ribbons, leather purse.
- **Rubber objects:** Ball, bath plug with chain, soap holder, door stop, coaster.
- **Metal objects:** Honey drizzler, an egg cup, curtain ring, egg poacher, measuring spoons, tea strainer, whisk, powder compact, bells, lemon squeezer, small bowl,
- **Natural objects:** A lemon or orange, coconut shell, grass rope, sheepskin, pumice stone, loofah, shells, pine/fir cones, driftwood, avocado stone, large pebbles.
- **Brushes:** Scrubbing brush, pastry brush, baby's hair brush, nail brush, makeup brush, paint brush, shaving brush, wooden toothbrush.
- **Other objects:** small vanilla essence or food colouring bottle, hair rollers, small mirror, scent bags, bone shoe horn, ceramic bowl



A note on safety - it is never a good idea to let small children and babies to chew on keys, as these frequently have lead and other heavy metals in them which can be ingested if mouthed - also ensure that you do not have any objects in the treasure basket made of pewter as this is also high in lead. If you intend on putting objects made from leather into your treasure basket, make sure they are genuine leather, and not imitation leather (which is made of PVC, and is very toxic for babies to be mouthing). In regards to choking, use a film canister to test object to make sure that they are not a choking hazard (anything that fits into the canister is small enough for a child to swallow or choke on). Give everything a good wash and rinse before offering it to your baby to play with and check the treasure basket regularly for broken objects.