



**Mill House**  
Day Nursery

# Water Play at Home

## April 2020



## The benefits of water play

Water play is a staple at Mill House. It's available with unrestricted access in the preschool and toddler rooms and as a planned activity in the baby room. So much learning comes from water play, e.g., **Personal, Social and Emotional Development:** aware of boundaries, asking for help, clearing up after self; **Communication and Language:** paying attention, following directions and instructions, showing an interest, what/why/how questions, putting words/sentences together to explain knowledge and understanding, using talk in pretend play; **Physical Development:** handling equipment and resources, enjoying sensory experiences, handling tools and objects, changing wet clothing or helping with this activity, **Mathematics:** empty/full/more/less; **Understanding the World:** talks about why things happen or explores why something may happen or change; **Expressive Art and Design:** Incorporates story lines into play, plus so much more.

## Equipment

You don't need much equipment at all for water play to be engaging for young children. Some equipment that you will already have at home will include:



- Washing up bowl or large food container (Tia (now nearly 14 yrs) shown playing with a large food storage box)
- Measuring jugs
- Beakers
- Measuring cups
- Empty shampoo bottles
- Pump bottles (hand wash etc.)
- Squeezy bottles (great for the garden!)
- Objects that will float or sink



- Small world objects such as animals, people and cars
- Sponge and cloth
- Funnels – easy to make
- Scoops e.g., ice cream scoops
- Empty yoghurt pots
- Blocks of ice
- A length of garden hose (for blowing through of for using with a funnel).

### Wet and messy!

You'll need to have some large towels handy for the floor, for under the bowl itself, and for your child to dry their hands on after play. Leave the bowl out for a period of time so that your child may play with it, move onto something else, and return to the play as they'd like. Try not to see this as a 'now we are going to do water play' activity, rather as a free access activity (age permitting). Have a few activities available for free access, e.g., a water activity, a dough activity, a mark making activity, perhaps small world play and a cosy book area. Most children like to move between activities, returning to different activities throughout a session. So long as you have a set routine and an agreed tidy-up time when all activities are cleared away, e.g., before lunch, then things should not get too hectic, rather, you should find your child stimulated and engaged throughout the play session. Have fun!

### Set boundaries

Set boundaries, e.g., 'Keep the water in the bowl', 'Tidy-up time will be in 10 minutes.' and expect your child to observe boundaries set. Have high expectations.

## Safety first

Children can drown in even a small amount of water so ensure that activities are supervised. That said, water offered for play should be deep enough to scoop and to observe sinking and floating. 2 cm of water will not facilitate this!

## Activity ideas

**A bowl and items to fill and empty.** Simply provide a bowl of water and a jug, a couple of empty bottles, a funnel, some plastic cups or toy cups and allow your child to fill and empty containers provided. This activity can be quite engaging for children and it will help them to think about capacity and volume.

**Clean small world toys (animals, vehicles or people).** Children love to clean small world toys. All you need is: a bowl, a cloth (cut a disposable cloth in half), a sponge (cut one in half for small hands to better manage), a tooth brush (to scrub animals clean), a little amount of washing-up liquid or hand soap and, of course, a child!

**Play with ice.** Have your child help freeze water in different size containers, e.g., a large tub, a medium sandwich box and a yoghurt pot. Children enjoy observing how ice melts, if you add some small world items as well you could ask for predictions on which will be released first. Add food colouring, e.g., blue and yellow and your child will be able to observe how the water changes to green as the two colours mix (or orange if you use red and yellow, or purple if your add red and blue etc).



**Ice treasure hunt.** Take a look at this YouTube clip for a great treasure hunt idea. You'll need to prepare for it but be assured that it will keep your child engaged for quite some time!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrIOHU\\_uj9A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrIOHU_uj9A)



**Paint with ice.** This is a great activity which your child will enjoy. If you need some lolly sticks let us know and we'll make some available for you. This is great for observing change (water to ice) and how colours can be changed when mixed. It's also a great mark making activity. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4A4rSIL6Ayk&t=29s>

**Sink Play.** Children who are able can also play at a kitchen sink. A stable chair will enable this activity – risk assess to ensure that your child can stay safe, e.g., from slipping or falling off the chair or from turning a hot tap on.

**Bath tub play.** Make the most of your bathtub. Have equipment stored in a large food container which you can access for bath-tub play. Beakers, bottles (small, medium, large – maths at play here), jugs, sponges (to clean the bath 😊), in fact anything which can be filled and emptied will enrich this play.

We all have lotions and potions left over from Christmas and birthdays. Offer these to enable the creation of lotions and potions.

A soapy sponge will keep little hands busy for a long while – make the most of not having to clean your bath during lock-down!

**Washing clothes.** Provide your child with some clothes to wash, e.g., socks etc. This can be quite an absorbing activity and it facilitates matching. Matching pairs as they are hung up, or colours etc is a great way to support maths development. Younger children will enjoy using pegs or just hanging items out to dry. Older children can observe change as something goes from being wet to dry and the subject of evaporation can be discussed and explored.





**Paint with water.** This is a great hit with children. Provide a bucket of water and a large DIY paintbrush and invite your child to paint the decking, a fence or a wall. Most children will not stop until the whole area has been covered! On a sunny day children

are able to observe how their work dries and disappears; invite them to paint an area in the shade and to predict what area will dry first, the sunny area or the shady area.

**Float or sink.** Provide resources which will float or sink. Ask your child to find small objects from around the home and to separate them into 'sink' or 'float' piles. Let them test their predictions.

You could add three balloons, one filled with water, one half filled with water and one filled with air. Ask your child 'what might happen?' You can also freeze 'balls' of water.



**Target practice.** You'll need a washing up bottle filled with water and a selection of empty bottles. Arrange the bottles and invite your child to try to bowl them over with squirts of water. You could number the bottles and record scores. If you

number the bottles, also add the corresponding number of spots for children to count.

There are so many ideas available on line. Have fun exploring new ideas and keep us in the loop. If you find something that works we can share these ideas with others.

Enjoy!

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