



# Wheat Sensory Play



It's September down on the farm, and Tractor Ted is helping with the wheat harvest. From the ears of wheat that grow in the fields to products such as bread and pasta, wheat comes in all shapes and sizes. Wheat in its many different forms offers lots of sensory experiences - and it's great fun for children of all ages to explore.

## THIS ACTIVITY...

- encourages children to investigate and learn about wheat
- helps children to develop and refine sensory perceptions
- offers lots of opportunity to explore different textures
- allows children to engage freely in the resources and manage their own exploration
- offers lots of opportunity for conversation and introducing new vocabulary

## WHAT TO DO

Gather some or all of the following -

- wheat ears
- straw
- wheat grain (berries)
- wheat bran
- white flour
- wholemeal flour
- breadcrumbs
- pasta shapes
- wholemeal playdough (see recipe on next page)

Place a selection of wheat resources in your Tuff Spot tray, along with sieves, scoops, jugs, plastic knives, magnifying glasses and other tools for exploration. Leave the children free to explore the resources in whatever way they wish. Join in with the exploration yourself and, where appropriate, engage the children in conversation. Look for opportunities to name the different resources, actions (e.g. scoop, mix, cut, sieve) and introduce texture and opposites words (e.g. rough, smooth, soft, hard, spikey).



Double check for celiac and gluten or wheat intolerance before letting children play with wheat-based products. Wheat berries can be a choking hazard; avoid using them with under-threes and/or children who do not understand about putting things in mouths. Be aware that the tips of straw and wheat ears can be sharp and scratchy, and supervise all age groups closely

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Vary the number of resources you offer to suit the age of the children. With two-year-olds, stick to pasta shapes, flour and breadcrumbs. Introduce further resources one at a time so children do not become overwhelmed.
- Show older children online footage of hand threshing. Look at the grains in some real ears of wheat (available for purchase online) - and then examine the wheat berries and straw that result from threshing and winnowing.
- Make the link between wheat grain and flour. If you have a pestle and mortar, powerful food processor or coffee grinder, try grinding some wheat berries to show the children how the grain is turned into flour.
- Using food for play raises issues about waste. Try to save stale bread for making breadcrumbs. Keep the wheat resources for further play and add anything that cannot be re-used to the compost heap. Talk to the children about how you are finding ways to recycle the resources, rather than throwing them away.
- Encourage children to make plaques and sculptures by pressing wheat ears, straw, grains and breadcrumbs into the playdough.



## Wheaty Words

**chaff** - the dry husks left over after the wheat grains have been removed

**ear of wheat** - the part at the tip of the plant that holds the wheat grains

**straw** - the dried wheat stalks left over after threshing

**threshing** - the process of separating the grains of wheat from the plant

**wheat berries** - another name for wheat grains

**wheat bran** - the outer part of the wheat grain, removed to make white flour

**wheat germ** - the part of the wheat grain that germinates to grow into a new plant

**winnowing** - the process of separating the grain from the chaff

## Whole wheat playdough recipe

### Ingredients

125g whole wheat flour  
100g salt  
120ml warm water  
1 tablespoon vegetable oil

### Directions

Mix together the flour and the salt. Combine the oil and the water and pour into the flour, stirring together until the dough forms a ball. Knead the dough on a floured surface until it's soft and pliable. Put the playdough in a sealed freezer bag and store in the refrigerator when not in use.

