

# Experimenting With the 5 Senses

## OBJECTIVES:

To understand what our senses do.  
To gain an appreciation of how our senses enrich our lives.

## GROUP SIZE:

6 to 8 children per adult volunteer.

## TIME FRAME:

This lesson is designed for a group meeting between 30 and 60 minutes.

## BACKGROUND:

Help children discover how incredible our five senses are. These activities and games will develop an appreciation for our ability to see, hear, taste, touch, and smell.



## LIFE SKILL AREAS

The group discussions and experiments are a good way for children to develop social skills and decision making skills. Fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination can be developed through tearing paper and using chalk.

## HELPS TO THE VOLUNTEERS

*Try these suggestions:*

- Choose one or two of the following activities from each section.
- Try to create appropriate atmosphere by decorating the room with posters and props, using costumes related to the activity, pre-meeting preparation by the 4-H members, thinking about special seating arrangements, and playing background music.

**LEARNING ACTIVITIES:**

**I. GETTING STARTED**

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Hide the Glasses" (7 - 9 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** a pair of glasses

Help the children discover how valuable our gift of sight is. Select one child to hide the glasses while the rest of the group leaves the room. The glasses must be hidden so they are visible (they are not under or inside anything). Invite the group back in to find the glasses. The first one to find them gets to hide them for the next game. Talk about how our eyesight makes our lives special. Discuss the questions:

- Do you think you could find the glasses if you were blindfolded?
- What do you think it would be like if you couldn't see at all?
- Can you imagine what it would be like to only see things in black and white?
- Can you think of ways that poor vision can be corrected?
- Do you know anyone who has had their vision corrected?

**Application:** Encourage the children to be aware of their precious gift of sight. Have them try to get dressed with their eyes closed. Have them try again with their eyes open. Does being able to see make a difference? How?

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Rainbow and Sunset Art" (5 - 7 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** newsprint, white construction paper, colored chalk or pastels, and cotton balls.

Encourage children to think of beautiful things their eyes can see. Talk about beauty in nature. Ask if anyone has ever enjoyed a sunset or a rainbow. Help the children create their own sunsets and rainbows with colored chalk. Show them how to tear strips of newsprint and color the edge of it with chalk. Place the colored strip on top of the white construction paper. Rub the colored dust off the newsprint onto the construction paper with the cotton balls. Repeat, tearing new strips of newsprint and using different colors of chalk. The jagged edges where the newsprint is torn make the color rubbed on the construction paper really look like the sky at dusk.



Note to the Volunteer: Have the children make extra examples to use in the Art Exhibit and Cloverbud Display lessons in the subject area of Community Expressive Arts.

**Application:** Encourage the children to look for beautiful things in their environment. Ask them to invite their family to enjoy a sunset with them or perhaps a sunrise.

## ..... EXPERIMENTING WITH 5 SENSES .....

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "What's That Sound?" (7 - 9 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** two chairs, a sheet, familiar household objects such as a stapler, hand vacuum, measuring spoons, paper in spiral notebook to tear out, popcorn in a plastic jar, jar with metal lid to unscrew, dog leash or collar, handful of change, etc., and a brown paper grocery bag to keep items hidden from view.

Drape the sheet over the two chairs to make a curtain to keep all of the sounds out of sight. Make one sound at a time, asking the children to identify it after listening carefully. Give hints if the selection is too difficult ("You might find it on a desk," or "You use it to fasten papers together.") Repeat until everyone has had an opportunity to identify a sound.

**Application:** Encourage the children to use their sense of hearing at home and school to identify things they can hear but not see.

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Animal Ears" (4 - 6 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** paper or styrofoam cups, with the bottoms cut out.

Ask if anyone has ever noticed that animals have larger ears than people; have them name some. Ask what they think it would be like to have "animal ears." Show them how to put the ears on (if the cups don't stay, the children can hold them to their ears). Experiment with whispering, talking, and singing with their "animal ears."



**Application:** Have the children observe their pets or other animals. What happens when the animals hear a loud noise, or a noise behind them? What can they do with their ears that people can't?

## II. DIGGING DEEPER

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "You Can Be a Texture Detective" (5 - 7 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** common household items with various textures such as cotton balls, crinkled foil, fabric swatches, fresh whole pineapple, aluminum screen, rough edged rocks or stones, marbles, etc., and a large brown grocery bag.

Talk to the group about different ways things can feel (soft, hard, rough, smooth, etc.). Show the children the bag of "mystery items." Ask one child at a time to reach into the bag, without looking, and grasp one item (do not remove from bag). Ask the child to describe the item by the way it feels and if they can identify it by touch. Have the child remove the item from the bag and see if they were an effective "texture detective."

**Application:** Invite the children to explore their tactile environment at home. How do the following different things feel?

- bathtub
- sweater
- pets
- ice cubes
- house plants
- hair
- cement
- carpeting

## EXPERIMENTING WITH 5 SENSES

☼ **ACTIVITY:** "Texture Rubbings" (5 - 7 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** small pieces of screen, lace, corrugated cardboard, paper doilies, sandpaper, fabric, plain newsprint, tape, and crayons or colored chalk.

Show the children samples of the different textures; let them feel each one. Talk about how each texture feels. Have each child place a piece of paper over their textures. Tape the paper down. Using the side of a crayon or chalk, have each child rub gently on the paper over the textures. Move the paper around, using different textures. Try different colors, too!

Note to the Volunteer: Have the children make extra rubbings to use in the Art Exhibit and Cloverbud Display lessons in the subject area of Community Expressive Arts.

**Application:** Have the children look around their environment at home, school, and outside. How many different textures can they feel?



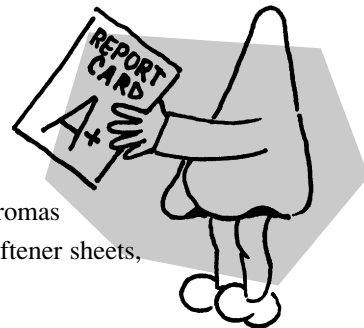
☼ **ACTIVITY:** "How Smart Is Your Nose?" (4 - 6 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** sandwich bags containing various items with strong, identifiable aromas (e.g., peppermint candy, toothpaste, coffee, onions, perfume, pickles, fabric softener sheets, moist soil), large paper grocery bag, and scarf to use as a blindfold.

Blindfold the children one at a time. Remove one "aroma" bag from the grocery bag and let the child smell the contents. See if the child can identify the aroma. Give hints if the smell is too difficult to identify. Let each child try to identify an aroma.

**Application:** Ask children to see if they can tell what is cooking for dinner by using only their sense of smell.



☼ **ACTIVITY:** "What Does It Taste Like?" (6 - 8 minutes)

**Grade Level:** 2 - 3

**Materials:** three different kinds of fruit juices, paper cups, and a scarf to be used as a blindfold.

With the children, pour a small amount of each kind of juice into a small paper cup. Identify, talk about, and describe each juice as it is being poured. Blindfold one child at a time and let them taste each sample. Ask if they can identify each juice. Repeat the activity, only this time have the child hold his/her nose while tasting the juice. Ask the child to identify each juice.

Ask the children if it was harder to tell when they could not smell. Explain that taste and smell are two senses that go together. That's why we sometimes get hungry when we smell food. It's also why sometimes when we have a cold (and have a stuffy nose), it's hard to taste things.

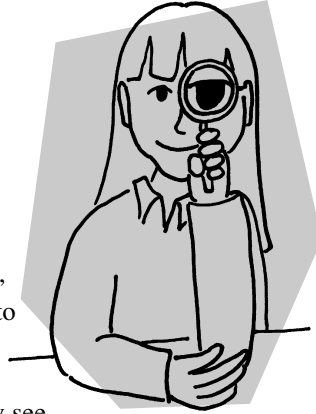
**Application:** Ask the children to pay attention to food they smell. Does it make them hungry?

### **III. LOOKING WITHIN**

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "You Can Be A Taste Detective" (6 - 8 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** a variety of foods such as pretzels, breakfast cereals, raisins, grapes, marshmallows, chips, etc., napkins and a handkerchief or scarf to use as a blindfold.



Explain to the group that it is possible to identify foods without actually seeing them. Simply by using their taste buds, they can be a "taste detective." Blindfold one child at a time. Ask them to keep their hands in their lap. Have an adult place a taste of one of the food samples in the child's mouth. Ask the child if they can identify the food. Repeat the process for each child in the group.

**Application:** Encourage the children to think about all the food they taste at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. How do the different things taste - sweet, sour, salty? What kinds of food taste the best?

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Sweet Plus Sour Equals Lemonade" (8 - 10 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** lemons, sugar, pitcher of water, ice cubes, measuring cups (2 cups, 1 cup, and 1/4 cup), strainer, drinking cups, and paper towels.

Making lemonade from scratch provides plenty of opportunities for hands on investigation. Children can learn a variety of skills and concepts; not only will they learn to measure, mix and pour, but to experiment with taste too! Discover how two very different tastes combine to make a delicious treat.

Give each child a lemon half to squeeze into the 2 cup measure (the seeds and pulp will be removed later). Collect approximately 1 to 1 1/2 cups of squeezed lemon juice. Using a strainer, pour the lemon juice into the pitcher of water; discard the seeds and pulp. Stir the lemon juice and water thoroughly. Add ice cubes. Have an adult pour just a taste into paper cups for each child and have children taste the sample. Ask how it tastes and what does it need to become lemonade? Add 1/4 cup of sugar at a time, stirring thoroughly after each addition. Encourage children to do a taste test again; let the children decide if the mixture is sweet or sour. Add enough sugar until the lemonade is "just right." Have each child pour their own to drink and enjoy.

**Application:** Encourage children to help their parents at home with cooking. Have them use their sense of taste to season the food until it is just right!



## IV. BRINGING CLOSURE

 **ACTIVITY:** "What If We Had No Senses?" (5 - 7 minutes)

**Grade Level:** K - 3

**Materials:** none

Gather children in a circle. Review the activities and experiments you have tried. Emphasize the importance of our wonderful senses. Discuss with the children the following questions:

- If you couldn't see, what would you be unable to enjoy?
- What couldn't you do?
- If you couldn't hear, what would you miss out on?
- What would it be like if you couldn't feel anything?
- How would your day be different if you couldn't smell or taste?
- What would you miss out on?

## V. GOING BEYOND

- 1** Encourage the children to appreciate their sense of hearing by having them listen to all the sounds in the environment for 45 seconds. When the time is up, ask them to list all the sounds they heard.
- 2** Have the children list 15 to 20 of their favorite foods. Help them categorize them by taste. Are they sweet, sour, salty or bitter?

### Reading Adventures

This listing of reading materials can be used by you as background, or for sharing before to set the stage for the lesson or for sharing afterwards to reinforce the lesson.

My Five Senses, by Aiki

Arthur's Eyes, by Marc Brown

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?, by Bill Martin

Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear, by Bill Martin

What?, by Leo Lionni