

Social Activity 1:

Exploring Treasure Bags in a Group

Primary Goal

Exploring in a social situation.

Secondary Goals

Developing the ability to explore, learn, and work independently; expanding concentration; developing sensory skills; developing concentration and self-confidence.

Material

Several toddlers.

Large work mat.

Cloth bags (about the size of small pillowcases), one per child participating in this group activity. If making the bags, try to use the same solid color of fabric for all the bags — and add drawstrings to help prevent the objects from spilling out when carried by the children.

Six or more real-life objects per bag, each bag containing a different category of object. The objects may vary in size, shape, and color. For example, Bag #1: assorted small purses; Bag #2: beanbags; Bag #3: balls; Bag #4: cardboard tubes (covered with paint or paper); Bag #5: tiny boxes with lids; Bag #6: hats. There should be enough objects in each bag for every child in the group — and a few extra.

Choose from a wide range of interesting and appealing objects that stimulate as many senses as possible, and include few plastic items. Make sure to choose objects safe for the toddlers' level of development. Examples: small purses with zipper or clasp opening; bicycle bells; pine cones; small boxes with lids; balls; beanbags; balls of crumpled-up tissue paper; napkin rings; sponges; shaving brushes; balls of wool; dried gourds; wooden clothespins; multicolored wooden beads tied securely on a thick string; length of chain; metal colander; door knobs; silk scarves; adult-size socks and mittens; strips of fabric fastener; tea strainers;



powder puffs; scent bags (small cloth bags sewed or tied securely and filled with aromatic herbs or spices, such as lavender or cloves); small spiral notebooks. (For more ideas, please see the Materials and Equipment section in the Classroom Guide.)

To maintain the children's interest, change some of the objects in the treasure bags regularly. It is also important to check the contents of the bags after every use, to clean objects that have become soiled or replace objects that may cause injury.

Presentation

- This activity appeals particularly to the interests and abilities of mobile toddlers 12–18 months old.
- In advance, prepare the bags.
- Choose a time when you can gather three or four toddlers in a group. Put the work mat on a large, clear floor space and place the bags together on the mat. Encourage the children to help.
- Invite the children to sit in a wide circle around the work mat. You sit beside the bags.

If this is the first time the children have worked with the treasure bags

- Ask a parent volunteer or another caregiver to stay nearby, to help as needed.
- Slowly pick up a bag and roll back the top a bit to reveal the objects inside, then place the bag on the floor. Continue with the other bags, placing them in a circle around the work mat. Leave a space of 18 inches (46 cm) or more between each bag so that the children have to move to get from one bag to another.
- Invite the children to examine the contents of the bags. For example, say, “Look at these interesting bags. You see what’s inside.”
- As soon as the children begin to focus on the bags, quietly remove yourself from the scene, and join the other adults observing and staying attentive to the children's safety. It is important especially for young toddlers new to this activity that adults stay nearby to provide emotional stability.



- As the children work with the objects, do not intervene or interrupt unless absolutely necessary. Allow the children to explore on their own for as long as their focus lasts. Some children may finish before the others, and can be invited to join another caregiver or do another activity.
- When the children have finished the activity, involve them in putting the objects into the bags and returning the work mat and materials to their proper places. This completes the activity.
- Make sure that the materials presented stay available — on a low shelf, for example — for the children to work on again when they wish.

If the children have worked with the treasure bags before

- Place the unopened bags in a circle around the work mat. Leave some space between the bags so that the children must move to get from one bag to another.
- The children will probably start exploring the contents of the bags immediately.
- Once the children start exploring, quietly remove yourself from the scene. Remain nearby, staying quiet and attentive to the children's safety, but do not intervene or interrupt. Let the children explore on their own for as long as they wish.
- When the children have finished the activity, involve them in putting the objects into the bags and returning the work mat and materials to their proper places. This completes the activity.
- Make sure that the materials presented stay available — on a low shelf, for example — for the children to work with again when they wish.