



Exploring our senses through dance

This pack introduces some playful movement activities exploring the five senses, that children and adults can do together. The activities are based on some of the early improvisations that we used in rehearsals when we were creating our dance theatre production, FIVE.

There is no right or wrong response to these movement inspirations- they're about encouraging children to focus in on their own senses and see how their bodies want to move. You can use these activities just as they are, or as a starting point for choreographing more developed dances, particularly with older children.

Who can play?

These activities can all be carried out by one adult and one child, or an adult with a group of children. In most cases there is:

- A leader- offering the sensory inspiration
- A mover- responding with their body, however they want to

If you're an adult partnering a child, you might want to be the leader, while if children are working together in pairs, they could swap roles after a while.

We'd recommend the activities for ages 5+ (KS1) but they can of course be modified for older or younger children. They are all accessible for children with physical disabilities and/or sensory impairments, with support from you, their friendly adults.

There's also no upper age limit for joining in- we'd love to get parents, teachers, carers and grandparents doing lemon dances and smelling stinky socks too!

What you will need

This written pack is supported by:

- five short videos introducing the activities (all captioned and BSL-interpreted) with examples performed by the cast of FIVE.
- five specially composed pieces of music, free to download, which accompany the activities.

You can find these at www.winterwalker.org.uk

There are a few other things you'll need for some of the activities, but they're all everyday objects. While it's lovely if you have a big space to move in, you can do all these activities at home, in a classroom or outside- all you need is a bit of clear floor space.

We really hope you and your children enjoy the activities, we'd love to see and hear how you get on. You can find us on Facebook and Twitter (@winterwalkeruk), or email us via the website. Thank you for coming to play!



Hearing Activity - Sounds Around

You Will Need

- Somewhere fairly quiet, but where sounds can filter in- an outside space could work well.
- A watch, clock or phone to time one minute.
- Musical instruments or noise-makers like shakers, chimes and whistles (optional).

What To Do

Start by sitting in silence for a minute; the leader should time it, and the mover might want to close their eyes. Talk about everything you heard in that minute. The sounds might be external, like a car driving past, or internal, like your own breath.

Sit in silence for another minute, and every time anyone hears a sound, they point in the direction it's coming from.

Standing, continue to listen and point. Explore how pointing can evolve from something you just do with your hand, to something you can do with different body parts.

Now introduce the music; the mover chooses a specific body part to move, or gesture to do, with each different sound that they hear.

You could expand this so the leader plays live sounds for the mover to respond to.

Top Tips

This activity doesn't necessarily need a leader and a mover, it's something a group could do together, and adults and children can do on an equal footing.

For d/Deaf children, live sounds may be more accessible than recorded music, particularly if the rhythm is reinforced visually, as with a shaker or a drum.

Music: *Hearing* by Wayne Walker-Allen
Available to download at www.winterwalker.org.uk



Sight Activity - Body Part Solos

You Will Need

- A darkened room
- A torch or small light: try putting a cardboard toilet roll tube on the end of a small torch to make a more focused spotlight
- A mirror (optional)

What To Do

The leader uses a torch or small light to shine a spotlight onto one part of the mover's body

The mover tries to make just the highlighted body part dance, as if it's a tiny performer in a spotlight!

The mover could try making their dancing body part:

- Wiggle
- Open and close
- Move slowly: stretching, floating, twisting
- Move quickly: fluttering, shivering, flickering
- 'Look' around
- Draw shapes in the air

You could then try placing a mirror so the mover can see their dancing body part.

Top Tips

Start with an easy-to-move body part like hands, then try something more challenging like a knee or a shoulder. Don't forget faces too!

For children with visual impairments, having the mover stand in front of something in a plain colour (like a curtain, or a plain wall) may help give a clearer contrast.

Music: *Sight* by Wayne Walker-Allen
Available to download at www.winterwalker.org.uk



Smell Activity - Attract and Repel

You Will Need

- Some strong-smelling items, small enough to hold in one hand. A good option could be a cotton wool ball soaked in something smelly (like vinegar or mouthwash) and placed in a paper cup

What To Do

Have the mover smell the various items and choose one they particularly like, and one they really don't like!

The mover focuses on the sensation of breathing in the good smell- see how the inhale inflates and energises their body. Then focus on breathing out the bad smell, see how the exhale can push the body to move.

Start with just the nice-smelling item. The leader traces a pathway in the air with the item, and the mover follows it with their nose.

Then introduce the bad-smelling item! The mover tries to keep following the pathway of the nice item while avoiding the nasty one. The leader could keep both items behind their back so the mover doesn't know which one they're going to be smelling next.

Top Tips

Start slowly, and you could ask children to close their eyes to really focus in on the smell and the sensation of breathing.

Take the usual safety precautions around using anything chemical. Food and toiletry items are usually a good option.

Music: *Smell* by Wayne Walker-Allen
Available to download at www.winterwalker.org.uk



Taste Activity - Flavour Words

You Will Need

- A range of foods with strong, ideally contrasting flavours, cut up into bite-size pieces
- A pen and paper to write down descriptive words

What To Do

The mover is given a piece of food, and asked to focus on the taste and other sensations in their mouth as they:

- Taste it with the tip of their tongue
- Place it into their mouth and hold it there
- Chew it slowly, then swallow

Discuss the sensations together- the taste, texture and perhaps any images or associations the flavours brought up. The leader could jot down the descriptive words.

The leader chooses two or three key words from the mover's description. A lemon might be spiky, sharp and juicy, for example.

With the music, the mover explores dancing with the quality of the descriptive words. Finding spiky gestures with their hands and feet, making their body into sharp pointy shapes, and then relaxing in a juicy, bouncy way, for example.

Top Tips

Look for unusual foods that children might not have encountered before, like pickled gherkins or crystallised ginger, and contrast them with something very familiar, like a digestive biscuit. The stronger flavours may be easier to describe, but the blander ones might spark an interesting conversation and some subtler description.

Take the usual safety precautions around allergies and choking, in particular make sure that the mover doesn't have anything still in their mouth when they start to move.

Music: *Taste* by Wayne Walker-Allen
Available to download at www.winterwalker.org.uk



Touch Activity - Tickly Touch

You Will Need

- Nothing but bodies!

What To Do

The leader places a hand gently onto the mover's body. The mover moves that body part towards where they feel the point of contact, then freezes when the touch is removed.

Next the leader can explore different qualities of touch, and see if they spark different ways of moving in response

Qualities to try:

- A firm press with an open palm might make big movements like spinning or travelling
- A sharp pinpoint with one thumb might make short, sharp movements
- A long brush with the back of a hand might make flowing, sweeping movements
- A tickly wriggle with the fingertips might make shimmying, shaking movements (and giggles!)

Top Tips

Start this exercise slowly, possibly asking the mover to close their eyes to help focus on the sensation of touch.

The leader should start with firm but gentle touch so as not to tickle until the mover feels comfortable.

If children are working together, you might want to have a conversation with them about touch and boundaries. Help them agree together where the appropriate areas are on their bodies for the touch to land, and where to avoid.

Music: *Touch* by Wayne Walker-Allen
Available to download at www.winterwalker.org.uk