

Play Ideas

Mirror play

Mirrors are a great way to help young children explore. It can increase their ability to focus, track images and explore and recognise their own facial expressions. This all helps with their social and emotional development

Watch a child with a mirror:

- Do they reach out to touch themselves?
- Do they realise it's their own face they are seeing?
- Do they recognise you in the mirror?
- Do they interact with you through the mirror?

To encourage looking, try:

- Make a 'Faces' box with hats, silly glasses, sunglasses, sparkly crowns, antennae, masks, animal noses, etc.
- Stick a bright red sticker or a bit of paint/ face paint on their nose to see if they notice or use red noses from Comic Relief.
- Put a toy on top of the mirror to help support visual exploration.



Mirror play can help develop vocabulary. Try:

- Copy their expressions in the mirror and then try making different faces; stick out your tongue, make wide eyes, wrinkle your face. Do they copy?
- Play hiding games or use a favourite toy to play 'peek a boo' in the mirror with the toy. Do they begin to look for where you or the toy is going to reappear in the mirror?
- Point to and name your nose, eyes, ears, hair and then their nose, eyes etc. Can they copy you?

Sensory play ideas could include:

- Drop button, shells or beads on the mirror to hear the sounds they make (choking hazard).
- Place leaves, pinecones and other natural materials on the mirror so you can get the sensory feel of the materials and explore their reflections at the same time.
- Use paint to make marks on mirrors with brushes or fingers and use cloths to wipe it off and reveal their face.

The size and position of a mirror can be important to encourage play. Consider:

- A4 mirrors can be put on a table, a wall or even on a lap.
- Makeup mirrors are easy to hold and carry around.
- A hand-held mirror can encourage passing from one hand to the other.
- A well supported, sturdy mirror can be used on the floor during tummy time.
- Some mirrors can be wall mounted just above the skirting board for ease of access for a child.

