

Lolly Stick Rainbow Adventure

Materials Needed

- A pack of coloured lolly sticks (craft sticks) - ensure they are smooth and splinter-free.
- An empty cardboard box or a plastic container with a lid (like an oatmeal container or coffee can).
- A small, shallow tray or bin.
- (Optional) Play-doh or modelling clay.
- (Optional) A metal bowl or pot.

Important Safety Note: This activity requires constant and direct adult supervision. Lolly sticks can be a potential hazard if mouthed excessively or if the child falls while holding one. Inspect sticks for any damage before and after play.

Learning Objectives (Developmental Goals)

By the end of this playful session, the child will have had the opportunity to:

- **Develop Fine Motor Skills:** Practice grasping, holding, picking up, and releasing objects (pincer and palmar grasp).
- **Enhance Hand-Eye Coordination:** Work on coordinating what their eyes see with what their hands do, especially during posting activities.
- **Engage in Sensory Exploration:** Feel the smooth texture of the wood, see the bright colours, and hear the sounds the sticks make.
- **Explore Cause and Effect:** Discover that dropping a stick makes a sound, or pushing a stick through a hole makes it disappear.
- **Practice Language Exposure:** Hear and associate words for colours (e.g., "red stick," "blue stick") and actions (e.g., "in," "out," "tap, tap, tap").

Lesson Plan

1. Introduction: The Stick Surprise (2-3 minutes)

The goal here is to spark curiosity and introduce the material in a fun way.

1. Sit on the floor with your child in a comfortable, safe space.
2. Hold the lolly sticks in your hands, hidden from their view. Shake them gently so they make a soft rattling sound. Ask with excitement, "Ollie, what's this sound? What do I have?"
3. Slowly reveal the colourful sticks. You can let them cascade onto the floor or into a tray. Use simple, exciting language: "Wow! Look! Rainbow sticks!"
4. Allow your child a moment of free exploration. Let them touch, pick up, and handle the sticks as they wish, always under your watchful eye.

2. Main Activities: Let's Explore! (5-10 minutes)

Move through these activities based on your child's interest. Don't force any activity; if they are happy just holding and banging the sticks, that is a valuable experience in itself!

Activity A: Posting Practice

This is fantastic for fine motor skills and problem-solving.

1. Take your cardboard box or plastic container. Carefully cut a few thin slits in the lid, just wide

enough for a lolly stick to be pushed through.

2. Demonstrate the activity first. Take a stick and say, "Mila, watch! I'm putting the stick **in** the box." Slowly and deliberately, push the stick through a slot. Make a fun sound like "Whee!" or "Pop!" as it disappears.
3. Hand a stick to your child and encourage them to try. Guide their hand if needed, but let them do as much of the work as possible.
4. Celebrate every attempt, whether the stick goes in or not! "Great try!" or "You did it!"

Activity B: Tap, Tap, Clatter!

This activity focuses on auditory sensory input and exploring cause and effect.

1. Give your child two lolly sticks. Show them how to tap them together to make a noise. You can sing a simple song like "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" while tapping to the beat.
2. Introduce the shallow tray or a metal bowl. Demonstrate dropping the sticks into the container. Emphasize the sound it makes. "Listen, Oliver! Clatter, clatter!"
3. Let them practice dropping the sticks in and taking them out. This simple action is a powerful lesson in object permanence ("it's gone!") and motor control ("I can let go!").

Activity C: Sticking in the Dough (Optional)

This is a wonderful sensory and strengthening activity.

1. Present a flattened lump of play-doh.
2. Take a lolly stick and show your child how to poke it into the play-doh so it stands up. "Look! A little tree!"
3. Encourage your child to poke the sticks into the dough. This requires them to use different hand and wrist muscles.
4. Talk about the colours as they play. "You're using the yellow stick! Now the green one!"

3. Closure: Tidy-Up Song (2-3 minutes)

A calm and positive way to end the activity and transition to the next part of your day.

1. When you notice your child's interest starting to wane, signal that the activity is ending soon. "One more minute with the sticks!"
2. Start a simple tidy-up song. (To the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"):
*"Time to put the sticks away,
 We'll play again another day.
 One by one, we put them in,
 Now our clean-up can begin."*
3. Encourage your child to help you place the sticks back into their original container or a designated bag. Praise their help enthusiastically.

Differentiation and Extension

- **For Younger Toddlers (or for simplifying):** Focus purely on the sensory aspect. Let them hold, mouth (safely), and bang the sticks. The "Tap, Tap, Clatter!" activity is perfect. You can also place the sticks in a sealed, clear plastic bottle with some rice to make a shaker.
- **For Older Toddlers (or for a challenge):**
 - Begin very simple colour recognition. Hold up a red stick and ask, "Can you find another red one?" Don't worry about them getting it right; the goal is exposure.
 - Use the sticks for simple construction by laying them on the floor to make shapes like a square or a triangle.
 - Create patterns with the play-doh activity (e.g., red stick, blue stick, red stick).

Assessment (Observational Checklist)

While playing, informally observe and note your child's developmental progress. No pressure, just gentle observation.

- Does the child successfully pick up a lolly stick using their whole hand (palmar grasp)?
- Do they attempt to use their thumb and forefinger to pick one up (pincer grasp)?
- Can they hold a stick in each hand at the same time?
- Do they show interest in putting the sticks into a container?
- Do they imitate your actions (e.g., tapping sticks together, posting)?
- Do they react to the sounds the sticks make (banging, clattering)?
- Do they maintain focus on the activity for a few minutes?