

Play and learn about sharks and ocean creatures with our Five Days of Play Planner. Take your pick from the different Play Cards to enjoy whenever you choose!

**Read: That's not my shark...** an Usborne touchy-feely book! Encourage your child to feel the different textures of the sharks in the book. Can they describe how they feel?

## Play Card 1

### Under the Sea Reading Den

Create an under the sea imaginative play and storytelling den using material, lights, and homemade decorations!

## Play Card 2

### That's not my shark... Touchy-Feely Tray

Create a touchy-feely tray full of different textures and colours to explore when reading the book, **That's not my shark...**

## Play Card 3

### Chia Seed Slime Ocean Small World

Use chia seeds to create a simple and slimy ocean world that will keep your child mesmerised.

## Play Card 4

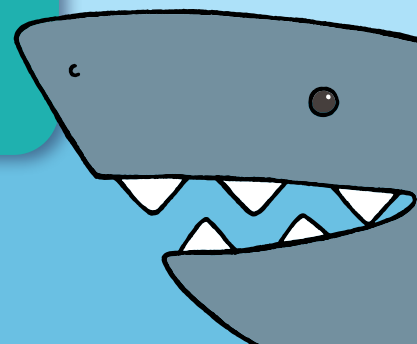
### Sea Creature Rescue

Use tongs to avoid the criss-crossing tape and rescue the sea creatures from the sensory bin.

## Play Card 5

### Shark Sensory Bottle

Create a calming sensory bottle inspired by all the creatures you can find in the sea.



# Play Card 1

## Under the Sea Reading Den



### Quick summary

Create an **under the sea imaginative play and storytelling den** using material, lights, homemade underwater creatures made from tin foil, and tissue paper!

### Key skills

Imaginative Play,  
Storytelling, Regulating  
Emotions (calm, quiet time),  
Creativity



### What you need

A suitable table, coloured paper or card, string, tin foil, sticky tape, blue sheet or blanket, cushions, fairy lights and strips of tissue paper.



### Instructions

Depending on the age of your child, they might enjoy setting up the den with you!



**1. Find a suitable table** from which you can hang various materials to create a cosy den.

**2. Create your homemade shiny fish** decorations. On pieces of card, draw and cut different shapes representing the sea creatures that live in the ocean – for example, a starfish, fish, or jellyfish.

**3. Wrap your shapes in a shiny material** such as tin foil to create shiny underwater creatures.



**4. Attach string to your shiny creatures** and hang them from the underside of the table using sticky tape.

**5. Cut strips of tissue or crepe paper** in different shades of blue or green and attach them to the table so that they hang down.

**6. Place blankets and cushions** around the floor of the den. Add your fairy lights so that the den is cosy and provides an enjoyable sensory experience for your little one.

**7. Add *That's not my shark...*, *That's not my turtle...*** and other sea-themed books.

### Make it more challenging

Allow your child to explore the den whenever it captures their interest, looking at the fish, describing them, or turning the pages of the books.



### During your visit to SEA LIFE

Remind your child about the sea-themed books they've read as they explore the aquarium. Do they recognise any of the creatures that have read about? It might even be a good idea to bring relevant books with you, to help your child make connections between what they read and the world around them.



# Play Card 2

## That's not my shark... Touchy-Feely Tray



### Quick summary

Create a **touchy-feely tray full of different** textures and colours to explore when reading the book, *That's not my shark...*



### Key skills

Storytelling, Communication, Art, Memory Function, Problem-Solving, STEM

### What you need

A copy of *That's not my shark...*, a tuff tray or suitable container, pieces of paper to write down the textures, examples of different textures mentioned in the book: 'bumpy': rocks, shells, 'rough': Velcro, bark; 'sparkly': sequins, sparkly fabric; 'smooth': polished pebbles, bouncy ball, paper; and 'shiny': silver foil, sweet wrappers or teaspoons.

### Instructions



**1. Gather the assorted materials in a tuff tray.** Invite your child to touch them and enjoy the sensory experience. Can they describe how each material feels or what it looks like? For example, 'Does it feel smooth or bumpy?', 'Does it feel soft or rough?'.

**2. Encourage your child to choose the best adjective** to describe each material in the touchy-feely tray, then write the descriptive word below the material.

**3. Ask your child questions** about what they can feel. For example, 'This feels smooth. What else feels smooth?'.

**4. Get ready to read *That's not my shark...*** Before you start, ask your child if they can describe a shark or move their hand like a shark swimming through the water. Maybe they remember the sharks from a trip to their local **SEA LIFE** Centre?



Your child might want to focus on describing the colour or the size of the sharks. If they are able, they could even list and describe the shark's features and compare them to their own, e.g. their 'teeth are sharp' and 'their eyes are small.'

**5. See if your child can compare or match the textures** in their touchy-feely tray to the words and textures used in the book.

### Make it more challenging

Re-create a picture of the shark in *That's not my shark...* and see if your child can match the correct textures in the tray to the shark features.



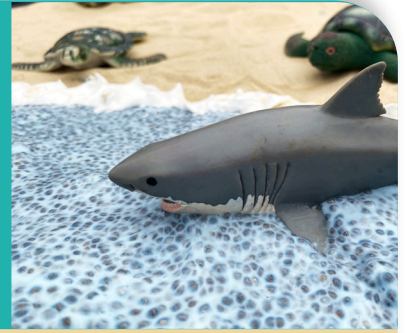
### During your visit to SEA LIFE

While at the shark tank, ask your child to point at the different sharks and their features. Can they spot the shark's eyes? What about their tail and fins? Encourage them to use the describing words they've learned (e.g. big, small, sharp, round, long, shiny, sparkly, smooth).



# Play Card **3**

## Chia Seed Slime Ocean Small World



### Quick summary



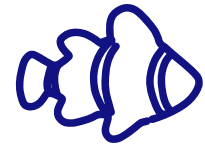
Use **chia seeds, water and blue food colouring** to create a simple and slimy (and edible!) ocean world that will keep your child mesmerised.

### Key skills

Communication, Fine Motor Skills, Imaginative Play, Problem-Solving, Memory Function, STEM

### What you need

A waterproof mat or splat mat, a tuff tray or container, bowl, chia seeds, water, blue food colouring, cornflour, plastic sea creatures, shells or rocks to decorate.



### Instructions

**1. Put 1 cup of chia seeds in a bowl.** Add 4 cups of water and 10-20 drops of food colouring. Let the bowl sit for about 20 minutes to allow the chia seeds to expand. You can also cover the mixture and leave it in the fridge to soak overnight.



**2. Lay down the waterproof mat** and place the tuff tray or suitable container on top of it.

**3. Transfer the chia seed mixture to your tuff tray or container.** Add three more cups of water if required, and a cup of cornflour to help thicken the mixture, depending on its consistency.

**4. Invite your child to touch** and hold the slime and talk about how it feels in their hands.

**5. Your child can experiment with the various stages of 'solidity',** observing how more cornflour makes the mixture become thicker and easier to pick up.

**6. Add any plastic sea creatures** or rocks and shells to create your ocean world. You can even create different areas or zones in the tray.



### Make it more challenging

Hide different sea creatures underneath shells or ocean rocks and see if your child can find them. Can they name the different creatures they see? Which creatures are their favourites?



### During your visit to SEA LIFE

See if your child can find the creatures in the different aquarium tanks. Can they count them? What colours do they see? Are any fish hiding under the rocks? Is there a turtle sleeping in the seaweed?



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# Play Card

## Sea Creature Rescue

4



### Quick summary

Use tongs to avoid the criss-crossing tape and extract the sea creatures from the sensory tub.



### Key skills

Communication, Fine Motor Skills (Hand-Eye coordination), Problem-Solving, STEM, Imaginative Play



### What you need



A tub or tray such as a washing-up bowl or a roasting tray, different toy sea creatures, sticky tape of different colours and widths, tongs, water, and blue food colouring.

### Instructions



1. Place the plastic sea creatures in the bottom of the tub.

2. Criss-cross the tape like a spider's web across the top of the tub, leaving gaps for children to reach through for the creatures. Adjust the amount of tape and the size of the gaps depending on your child's age, ability and dexterity.



3. Add water and some blue food colouring to create the look and feel of the ocean.

4. Give your child tongs or large tweezers to try to reach through the gaps in the tape and 'rescue' the different sea creatures.

5. Talk to your child and ask them how they feel as they rescue the creatures. Why is it good to look after the creatures in the ocean and to care about them?



### Make it more challenging

Instead of water, add things to the bottom of the tub, for example pasta or shredded paper, to make it more challenging for your child to extract the different creatures with the tongs.

### During your visit to SEA LIFE

Discuss with your child why it is important that we care for and look after the different creatures that they see in the aquarium. Help them to build empathy by thinking about what helps the creatures to feel happy in their environment. For example, food, shelter, clean water and companionship.



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### Quick summary

Create a calming sensory bottle inspired by the sea creatures in SEA LIFE aquariums and the book *That's not my shark...*

### Key skills

Imaginative Play, Regulating Emotions (calm, quiet time), Creativity, Fine Motor Skills (Scissor-skills), STEM



### What you need

A clear recycled bottle, water, blue food colouring, baby oil, foam (to create small sea creatures) or plastic sea creatures, child-friendly scissors, tape.



### Instructions

**1. Fill a bottle 2/3 with water.** Add a few drops of blue food colouring (you can experiment with different shades of blue) and some baby oil.

**2. Create your shark foam cut-out.** Use scissors to cut around it. Put your foam shark in the bottle along with some water. If you prefer, simply use a shark toy.

**3. Close the bottle cap tightly and shake the bottle** to mix everything together. Watch the water and shark float around and talk about what is happening.



**4. When you are satisfied with your sensory bottle,** don't forget to seal the cap with some strong adhesive such as tape. You can then roll it across the floor and watch the colours slosh around in the bottle, just like a little tide rolling in.



**5. You might want to repeat the activity** but for a different sea creature, experimenting with shapes and colours.

### Make it more challenging

Encourage your child to name the colours they see in their sensory bottles and use a rainbow chart or book to help develop their colour recognition skills.

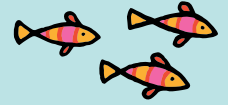
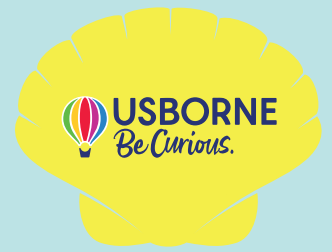


### During your visit to SEA LIFE

Take some quiet time to enjoy the sensory experience. Ask your child what colours they can see, what sounds they can hear, and what they can touch in the aquarium. How do they feel when see the different creatures for the first time?



# Top Tips for Visiting **SEA LIFE** with 0-5 Year Olds



Here are some ideas for how to get the most out of a visit to **SEA LIFE** with your little one!

★ **Before you arrive, generate excitement** by reminding your little one that they're going to meet some of their favourite creatures, from fish and sharks to turtles and jellyfish!

🐠 **Give your child a heads-up about what to expect.** For example, the aquarium is dark and cool in some areas, because this helps to keep the sea creatures happy.

🐙 **Let your child lead the way!** Many of our windows are low to the ground, the perfect height for little ones to peer inside.

🐠 **Play a game of Underwater I Spy!** Take turns being the spier ("I spy with my little eye a yellow fish!") and the finder ("There it is!").

🐠 **Encourage your little one to see the differences between the creatures** in the tanks and themselves. For example a fish has fins, but we don't. Why could that be?

🐠 **Don't forget to stop and enjoy the sensory experience!** Not only will your child meet lots of sea creatures, but there will be several opportunities to enjoy the different colours, textures and sounds in the aquarium.

🐠 **Bring your child to one of our touch pools** so that they can interact with some of the creatures with gentle hands. Encourage your child to talk about what they experience: "Does the starfish feel bumpy?" "Is the crab's shell hard?" Check the touch pool hours when you first arrive – they're not necessarily open the whole time the aquarium is.

🌸 **If your child seems overstimulated, look out for some of our calmer spaces,** where there is less sensory input, to let your child relax and recharge.

🐠 **Bring lots of snacks** or stop at our various snack-stops to refuel.

🐠 **A toddler might have had their fill after half an hour,** so be sure to plan ahead and make sure you leave time for some of the interactive activities, like live feedings.

🐠 **Have an exit strategy!** Sometimes it's hard getting your little one to leave, but maybe they can be tempted by a calm storytime in the buggy and a restorative nap.