

Water Balls

When toddlers discover these balls that look like, but are very different from, the balls they are familiar with, curiosity is aroused, shared delight ensues, and problem solving occurs. Infants will be surprised when they try to roll them.

What You'll Need

- Identical inflatable beach balls (8 to 10 for twelve toddlers).
- Water.

What to Do

- Fill half the beach balls approximately one-third full of water. Inflate them so they are all of equal size.
- Place them in the environment and let the children discover them.
- Reflect the children's interests.

Limits

- The same limits apply to any ball play: don't throw or drop the balls on someone who isn't playing. Teaching the use of the word *Ready?* before throwing a ball helps.

Other Things to Think About

- If this is a rainy day experience, consider where to use balls that may leak water.

Supporting Play

Use these strategies, shown in the following scenario, to support children's play:

- Provide choices of materials and time to manipulate them.
- Facilitate problem solving with observation and open-ended questions.

Twenty-month-old Zane runs to the beach balls on the grass. He picks up one and throws it. He chooses another, and leans over to pick it up, but his hands slip off it. He leans over again, getting a good grip, and picks it up and drops it. It makes a splashing clunk. Zane laughs. "Water," he says. "Yes, it's filled with water," caregiver Julie says. Zane locates two of the water balls and tries to pick them both up at the same time. He reaches both arms around them from every direction, but he quits after about forty-five seconds. Zane picks up one ball at a time and moves them to a spot on the edge of the grass. He kicks one expertly, maneuvering it like a soccer ball. Thirty-month-old George picks up one of the balls and shakes it near his ear. "This one has water," he announces. Julie says, "You can hear the water inside when you shake it." "Shake, shake, shake," George says. Eighteen-month-old Natalie follows George and picks up one of the balls and drops it. She repeats this about ten times, smiling the whole time.