

BY LINDSAY PONTA

Make Your Own Butterfly Sensory Bin

A HANDS-ON LEARNING ACTIVITY FOR LITTLE ONES THAT'S FLUTTERING FUN

It may finally be spring, but there's still a chance rainy weather will keep us indoors, going a bit stir-crazy with our kids. If that statement resonates with you on a deeply personal level, then I have just the activity to help pass the time: Butterfly Sensory Bin.

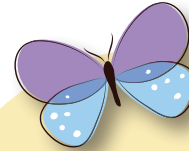
Activities that stimulate a child's senses are important for the development of important skills, such as motor skills, social skills and even language, math and science skills. And this Butterfly Sensory Bin stimulates lots of senses—perfect for little hands and growing minds. Picking up beads with tweezers and then threading them onto the butterflies, for example, helps build fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.

Since there are so many ways to play with this sensory bin, it can grow right along with your child. With toddlers, you can talk about colors and the differences between textures. Older kids might be interested in learning more about butterflies and other insects and how pollination works.

This sensory bin is also a fun way

for siblings to play together. Older brothers or sisters can play the teacher role, helping younger siblings explore tougher concepts. ■

Lindsay Ponta created the DIY and lifestyle website [Shrimp Salad Circus](http://ShrimpSaladCircus.com) in 2009 to inspire busy women to live perfectly imperfect creative lives. Find easy DIYs and recipes at shrimpsaladcircus.com.



SUPPLIES

2-pound bag of white rice	Bin or tray
Green food coloring	Artificial flowers
Large plastic bag	Yellow beads
Baking sheet or casserole dish	Toy butterflies
	Butterfly net
	Tweezers

Optional: Printable question cards from shrimpsaladcircus.com

INSTRUCTIONS

First, we're going to make "grass" for the butterflies to live on by dyeing white rice.

1. Pour 2 pounds of white rice into a large plastic bag.
2. Squeeze a generous amount of green food coloring over the rice.
3. Seal plastic bag, then shake and squeeze the rice until it's all green.
4. Pour green rice onto a baking sheet or casserole dish, and set it out to air dry overnight. **Note: Don't skip this step or your little ones will end up with green fingers and clothes!**



Now it's time to assemble the butterfly bin.

1. Pour the fully-dried green rice into a bin or tray.
2. Arrange a few artificial flowers on top of the rice.
- 3 Sprinkle a few yellow beads onto the centers of the flowers to make "pollen."
4. Place some butterflies around the flowers.
5. Add the tweezers and butterfly net to the bin.



Optional: Download butterfly question cards from shrimpsaladcircus.com (search "butterfly"), print and cut out. You can use the question cards to keep bigger kids engaged in this butterfly activity. They can help start discussions and create further opportunities for enrichment.

You can also find the questions below, along with ways to incorporate them into sensory activities.

Q: WHAT DO BUTTERFLIES EAT?

A: Butterflies sip nectar from flowers using their tongues.

Demonstrate a butterfly landing on a flower and using its tongue like a straw to drink the sweet nectar.

Q: WHERE DO BUTTERFLIES SLEEP?

A: Butterflies can sleep just about anywhere.

Put your butterflies to bed somewhere in the bin, and then wake them up in the morning to play again.

Q: HOW DO BUTTERFLIES GET AROUND?

A: Butterflies can walk on their six legs, but they love to use their wings to fly from flower to flower.

Pick up a butterfly and let it fly all around, landing on flowers along the way.

Q: HOW MANY BODY PARTS DO BUTTERFLIES HAVE?

A: Butterflies' bodies have three major parts: a head, a thorax and an abdomen. They also have two eyes, two antennae, two wings and six legs.

Investigate a butterfly to find and count all these body parts.

Q: HOW DO BUTTERFLIES HELP FLOWERS?

A: Butterflies are great pollinators. They pick up pollen as they drink from flowers, leaving some behind each time they land on a new flower.

Thread some yellow beads from the center of a flower onto a butterfly's legs to demonstrate how it picks up pollen. Drop a few beads at the next flower, showing how pollination works.

Be sure to share pictures of your Butterfly Sensory Bin on social media with the hashtag [#washingtonfamilymag](https://www.instagram.com/washingtonfamilymag) so we can see (and share!) your creativity.

