

Portable Seas

Create a mesmerizing, portable sea using water bottles, trinkets, and a little imagination.

Begin by removing the bottle labels and adding a few drops of blue food coloring to the water with your older children's help. While your preschooler and school-age child add "sea objects" to their bottles, your younger children can watch as you add objects to theirs. When the portable seas are completed, use glue to secure the caps to the bottles.

What You'll Need	All Ages	Baby	Toddler	Preschooler	School-Age Child
Clear plastic water bottles, ¾ full, with caps	✋				
Blue food coloring	✋				
Red and yellow food coloring					✋
Glue	✋				
1 teaspoon vegetable oil per bottle					✋
"Sea objects," like hermit crabs (acorns or rocks), minnows (twisted strips of aluminum foil), sea floor rocks (pebbles), fish (sequins), and dolphins (pieces of drinking straws)	✋				

Baby

Your baby will enjoy watching you drop objects into her portable sea. When you're done, place the bottle in front of her on the floor and gently push it so it rolls away. If she is six months or older, this action may entice her to retrieve it. If your baby is younger than six months, hold the bottle close to her ear and tilt it gently back and forth to create waves. The sound may remind her of the womb. To visually stimulate her, hold the bottle in front of her and encourage her to watch the sea objects float back and forth.

Toddler

Let your toddler point to the objects he wants you to add to his bottle. As you drop each one into the water, playfully say, "We're going to pretend this is a hermit crab." Talk about the sea with your toddler. Ask, "Who lives in the sea? How do they get around?" When you're done, he will love using his hands to shake the bottle as hard as he can.

Preschool

Your preschooler will enjoy watching the food coloring mix with the water, and he'll have fun shaking up his sea after he's added his objects. This activity can also be calming once the shaking stops. He may become entranced as he watches the objects slowly settle in the bottle.

School-Age Child

Your school-age child may want a blue sea, but as a variation, give her food coloring in all three primary colors at the beginning of the activity. Ask her to drip two colors into her water bottle and have her predict what color they will create. For instance, blue and red creates purple. Before she chooses her sea objects, ask her to predict which will float and which will sink. Were her predictions correct? She can also add a teaspoon of vegetable oil to her bottle. The oil will float to the top, giving her portable sea the look of a lava lamp.

Parent Tip

The portable sea is a great toy during bath time, car rides, or walks in the stroller.