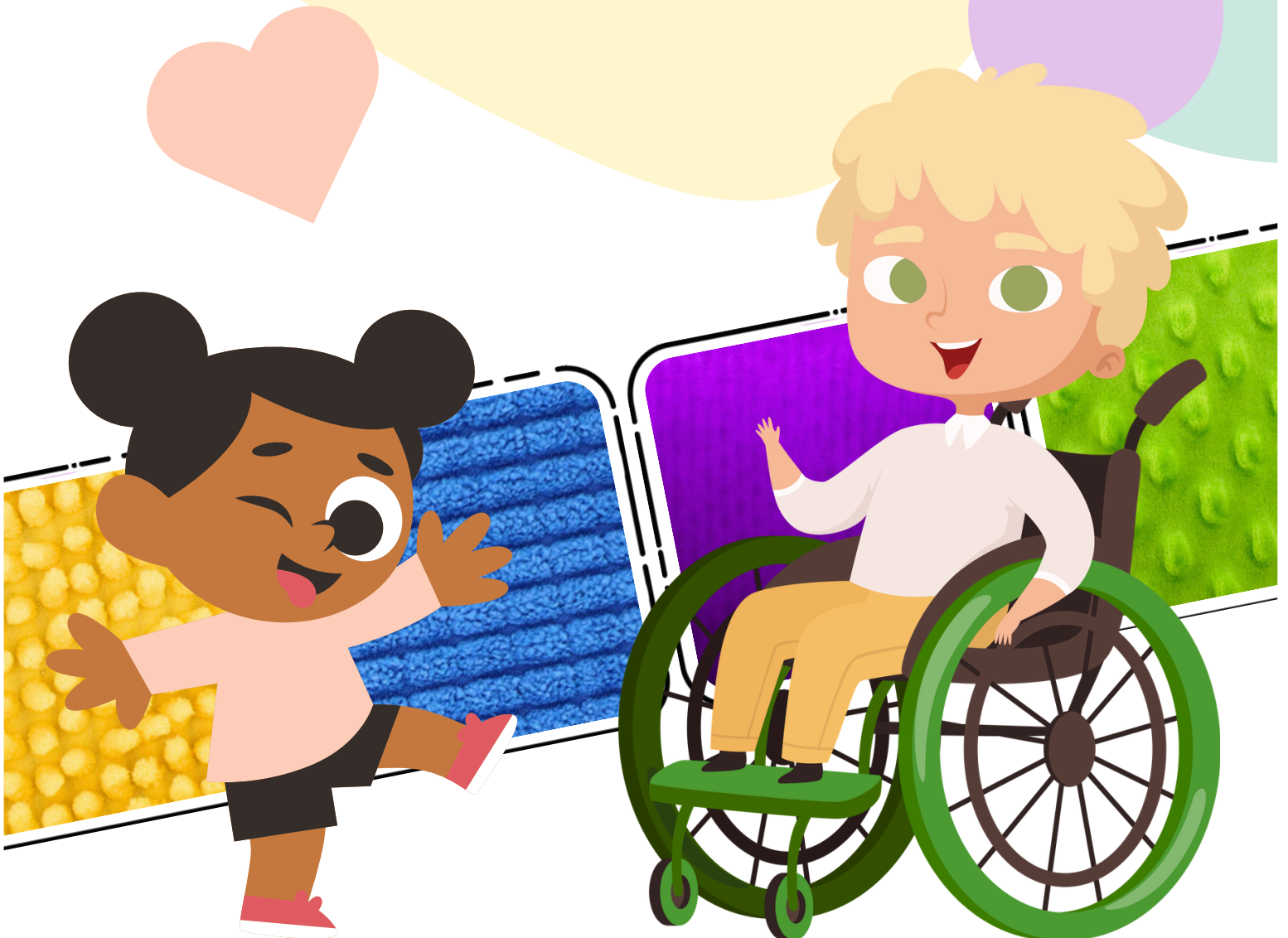




**Inclusive
Play**

CareSquares

PLAY GUIDE



CORE SENSORY & SHAPE SET

What's Inside

Your guide to inclusive play and sensory adventures.



Make Playtime Inclusive

Tips and strategies to support different learning styles.

- Motor Skills
- Sensory Input & Regulation
- Visual Impairment
- Movement & Focus
- Communication & Social Skills
- Safety Guidance



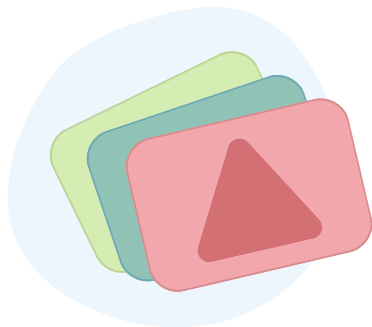
Storytime: The Sensory Path

A calming sensory story that encourages exploration through touch, sound, movement, and imagination.



Activities & Games

Seven flexible games that support communication, sensory exploration, problem-solving, and creativity.



Discovery Cards

Printable cards for matching, storytelling, descriptive language, and sensory discovery.



More Kids Videos

Visit our YouTube Channel for stories, fun activities, and learning videos.

Activities & Games

Explore sensory-rich activities and interactive games designed to support different skill levels, interests, and ways of learning.

..... ♥

Fun Activities

Gentle sensory experiences that encourage exploration, imagination, movement, and calming play.



- 1 Shape & Texture Explorer**
Explore textures and shapes through hands-on discovery, sensory confidence, and playful learning.
 - 2 Toe-Tap Texture Swing**
Pair calming movement with comforting textures to encourage grounding, relaxation, and sensory exploration.
 - 3 Imaginative Texture Trek**
Create playful stories and adventures inspired by textures, colors, and imagination.
-

Learning Games

Interactive challenges that build memory, matching, communication, sequencing, and problem-solving skills.



- 4 CareSquares Sorter**
Compare and organize textures in creative ways while building sensory awareness and descriptive language.
- 5 Memory Challenge!**
Listen carefully, remember the sequence, and place the CareSquares in the correct order.
- 6 Shape & Texture Match**
Match shapes and textures through interactive play that supports focus, communication, and hands-on learning.
- 7 Mystery Bag Detective**
Reach into the mystery bag, explore hidden textures, and use sensory clues to solve the surprise.

Make Playtime Inclusive

Tips and strategies to support different learning styles.

General Overview

Below are tips that most children will find beneficial.

- **Create Calm:** Remove visual clutter with a solid backdrop or a distraction-free space; turn off sound distractions; and dim lights to improve focus.
- **Honor Skill Level:** Introduce the number of CareSquares based on a child's skill level. For some, it maybe one square at a time, and that's okay!
- **Try Different Surfaces:** CareSquares are made for different types of play. So try hanging them or placing them on a table.
- **Explore with Variety:** Use other body parts and senses, such as listening for the different sounds that textures produce.



Motor Skills

- **Gross Motor Play:** Support reaching with hands or arm to build strength and coordination.
- **Fine Motor Practice:** Use hand-over-hand assistance when exploring textures and shapes.
- **Spark Imagination:** Use creative descriptions to motivate interaction with the mats, such as, "Let's brush the brown bunny's fur!"

Sensory Input & Regulation

- **Provide Firm Input:** Guide slow, firm pressure on textures (e.g., bumpy, smooth) to meet sensory needs.
- **Sensory Language:** Ask, "How does this feel?" or "Is this rough?" modeling answers to build verbal awareness.
- **Provide Sensory Outlet:** Use textured squares for sensory regulation, self-calming and fidgeting outlet, such as soft fur or crinkly silver squares.



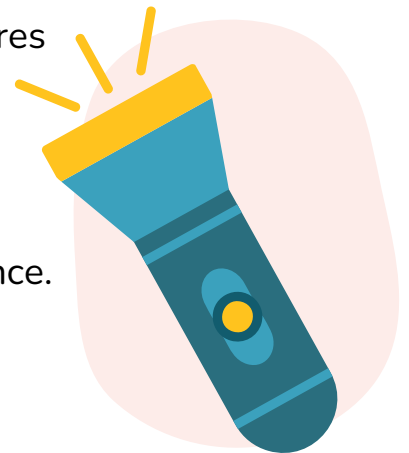
Important Safety Notes

- **Age & Mouthing Safety:** These mats are recommended for children **ages 3 and up**. To ensure safety, they are not intended for children who have a tendency to put objects in their mouths. For your child's safety and engagement, *always supervise playtime*.
- **Caution:** Anti-slip is not a guarantee against shifting. These mats are designed for hand and body exploration, and *weight bearing is not recommended as mats may move unexpectedly*.



Visual Impairment

- **Enhance Visibility:** Use focused lighting (like a flashlight) to highlight textures and colors.
- **Emphasize Touch:** Guide hands to explore diverse textures (ridged, soft, bumpy), describing each vividly.
- **Incorporate Sound:** Tap or gently manipulate the CareSquare for subtle sounds, encouraging listening.
- **Tactile Storytelling:** Inspire imagination by using CareSquares as prompts for stories, without visual reliance.
- **Preferred Senses:** For shape learning, incorporate the child's preferred color or texture to draw interest.



Movement & Focus

- **Channel Energy:** Encourage active manipulation like rubbing, pressing, or stacking the CareSquares.
- **Clear Tasks:** Give short, simple directions like "find the red texture" to keep engagement high.
- **Keep Hands Busy:** Textures are great for car rides and waiting rooms to keep hands and minds engaged.

Communication & Social Skills

- **Encourage Talk:** Describe textures and actions ("This feels soft!") and pause for their response in a low-pressure setting.
- **Encourage Shared Focus:** Guide children to observe and interact with the same CareSquare, fostering joint attention and shared experiences in play.
- **Spark Collaborative Stories:** Use CareSquares as prompts for simple, shared storytelling, encouraging children to contribute ideas.

Sensory Story Time

A calming sensory story that encourages exploration through touch, sound, movement, and imagination.



The Sensory Path

Take a slow walk together using the CareSquares textures and shape overlays.

There are no wrong answers. Each journey can feel different every time you explore.

Read the story alongside your CareSquares to encourage calm exploration and connection.



The Sensory Path



Follow the trail.
Explore with your senses.
What will you discover today?



We begin our walk in the early morning.
Birds are chirping.
The air is fresh.
We notice the path beneath us.

What does it feel like today?



We stop beside a quiet place along the trail.
Some parts feel smooth.
Some feel surprising.
We reach out carefully to explore.

What do your hands discover today?



A colored marker appears along the path ahead.
We stop to look more closely before moving on.
The marker is formed into a special shape.
We notice its color and pattern.

Which color and shape do you see today?



We continue along the quiet trail.
Leaves rustle nearby.
We pause and listen carefully.
Some sounds are quiet. Some are lively.

What sounds do you notice today?



The day begins to grow quiet.
Our walk is almost finished.
We pause, breathe in deeply, and rest along the trail.
Everything around us feels calm and still.

How does your body feel at the end of our journey?

Fun Activities

Gentle sensory experiences that encourage exploration, imagination, movement, and calming play.



1 Shape & Texture Explorer

Explore textures and shapes through hands-on discovery, sensory confidence, and playful learning.

2 Toe-Tap Texture Swing

Pair calming movement with comforting textures to encourage grounding, relaxation, and sensory exploration.

3 Imaginative Texture Trek

Create playful stories and adventures inspired by textures, colors, and imagination.



Shape & Texture Explorer

Goal: Build tactile and visual exploration of textures and shapes to improve cognitive development.

Boosts: Sensory integration, communication, and visual recognition.

Initial Setup

Select a few textures and cutouts, depending on the child's needs and skill level. Place them within easy reach and sight.

Activity Description

- **Present & Explore:** Gently place a shape cutout over a texture square. Either have the child feel the texture themselves, or guide the child's hand (or other accessible body part) to feel the texture.
- **Describe the experience:** Either have the child describe what they are experiencing, or model communication for them. "You're feeling the bumpy velvet inside the circle!" or "This is a heart with a silky texture."

Adaptation

- **Complex Learners:** The primary goal is the sensory experience itself. Celebrate any engagement, not just "correct" responses. Accept any consistent indication of preference or engagement (e.g., sustained gaze, a happy sound, a slight movement). Frequent repetition of favorite textures and shapes is highly beneficial. Integrate communication devices by programming simple choices or responses related to the CareSquares.
- **Foundational Play:** Use fewer textures and shape cutouts to reduce visual and tactile overwhelm. Guide the child's hand to place the shape and feel the texture, providing gentle physical support. Focus purely on sensory input and simple, repetitive verbal descriptions from the adult.
- **Expanded Play:** Introduce Challenges!
 - **My Choice:** Allow the child to drive: "Which shape do you want to feel?" or "Which texture should we use?"
 - **Find the Match:** "Can you find the fuzzy mat?" or "Can you find the triangle shape?" (Child points/indicates).
 - **Follow the Command:** "Put the circle on the gritty mat." (Child indicates, adult assists placement).



Toe-Tap Texture Swing

Goal: Experience a world of different textures using your toes, all while enjoying the gentle motion of a sensory swing!

Boosts: Relaxation, tactile exploration, sensory integration, body awareness, and cause-and-effect.

Initial Setup

- **Requirements:** A sensory swing that is securely installed and appropriate for the child's needs; and a clear, safe floor space beneath and around the swing.
- **Soft Textures Only:** Focus on softer textures like fur, velvet, corduroy, and silk. Remove textures that might be uncomfortable for sensitive feet (e.g., gritty texture, etc.).
- **Position:** Adjust the swing's height so the child's feet barely touch the floor when extended.
- **Texture Landscape:** Place a selection of the softer CareSquare mats on the floor directly beneath and within reach of the child's toes as they gently swing.

Activity Description

- **Gentle Start:** Help the child get comfortably settled in the swing. Begin with a very gentle, slow swinging motion.
- **Reach with Toes:** Encourage the child to extend their feet and let their toes lightly brush, tap, or press into the different CareSquare mats as they swing.
- **Verbal Exploration:** An adult can verbally describe the textures the child is touching using simple, engaging words:
 - "Oh, your toes are touching the soft, fuzzy fur!"
 - "Feel that bumpy velvet!"
 - "Now, you're touching the silky smooth mat!"
- **Observe & Respond:** Pay close attention to the child's reactions (smiles, giggles, pushing into a texture, pulling away). These are all forms of communication!
- **Follow Their Lead:** Linger on textures or motions the child prefers. Adjust if they seem disengaged. This is purely about sensory exploration and enjoyment, at the child's own pace.

Adaptation

Present one CareSquare at a time for focused exploration; place a favorite texture directly under their feet; or allow hand exploration if toe movement is difficult. Observe non-verbal cues (eye gaze, vocalizations); use simple "yes/no" prompts. Gently guide the swing and feet to ensure comfortable positioning.



Imaginative Texture Trek

Goal: Create imaginative stories with textures!

Boosts: Creative storytelling, descriptive language, imagination, sequencing, and tactile exploration.

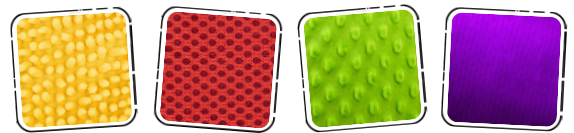
Initial Setup

- **Arrange the Sequence:** Randomly place the squares on your preferred play area to form a story sequence.
- **Introduce the Hero:** Decide together what kind of character will embark on this adventure. You can use the first square to inspire the description of the hero.

Activity Description

- **The Journey Begins:** The child (the "Storyteller") starts at the first CareSquare. This square represents the main character.
- **Touch and Tell:** The Storyteller follows the story sequence, touching each square and incorporating that texture into their tale using creative and descriptive words. *Example Story:*

"The **yellow porcupine** first came across a small patch of ripe, **red strawberries**! She ate every last one. She then sank her toes into some **green grass** and took a nap. She was awoken by a **magic carpet made of purple silk**! They glided through the air to discover fun new places...."



- **Continue the Tale:** Encourage the Storyteller to let their imagination run wild, connecting each new texture to the evolving plot and character's experiences.
- **The Grand Finale:** The story concludes when the Storyteller reaches the end of the texture path.

Adaptation

Fill-in-the-Blank: For children who need more support, use fewer squares and either provide prompts or use the guided story below.

- Our hero is a [describe character based on first square, e.g., 'cuddly, soft creature'] who loves to [action, e.g., 'snuggle'].
- They decided to set off on an adventure and stepped onto a [describe place based on second square, e.g., 'bumpy, uneven road'] where they [action, e.g., 'hopped carefully'].
- Suddenly, they discovered a [describe object/event based on third square, e.g., 'shimmery, sparkling treasure'] that made them feel [emotion, e.g., 'excited and curious'].
- Their journey ended on a [describe final setting based on fourth square, e.g., 'gritty, sandy beach'], where they [action/outcome, e.g., 'built a magnificent sandcastle'].

Learning Games

Interactive challenges that build memory, matching, communication, sequencing, and problem-solving skills.



4

CareSquares Sorter

Compare and organize textures in creative ways while building sensory awareness and descriptive language.

5

Memory Challenge!

Listen carefully, remember the sequence, and place the CareSquares in the correct order.

6

Shape & Texture Match

Match shapes and textures through interactive play that supports focus, communication, and hands-on learning.

7

Mystery Bag Detective

Reach into the mystery bag, explore hidden textures, and use sensory clues to solve the surprise.

4

CareSquares Sorter



Goal: Explore, compare, and sort your CareSquare mats based on their unique textures!

Boosts: Tactile discrimination, descriptive language, comparison, and logical reasoning.

Initial Setup

Mix up all the textured CareSquares and spread them out randomly on your play surface. Ensure they are within easy reach.

How to Play (Single Player Game)

- **The Challenge:** Present a sorting challenge based on texture. Suggested challenges are as follows:
 - **Soft to Rough**
 - **Short Texture to Tall Texture**
 - **Natural to Man-Made Feel**
 - **Most Comforting to Least Comforting**
 - **Categories:** Sort into groups like "clothing," "floor," and "animal."
- **Feel and Compare:** Let the child pick up and feel the different textures. Encourage them to describe what they feel.
- **Arrange the Mats:** Have the child arrange the mats per the challenge.
- **Discuss and Confirm:** Once sorted, discuss the arrangement, letting the child explaining why certain mats were placed where they were. There might be multiple "right" answers depending on individual perception, which is great for discussion!

Adaptations

- **Complex Learners:** Use just two CareSquares with contrasting textures, give the child plenty of time to explore both squares, then provide a simple yes/no choice. For example, "Is this texture the softest?"
- **Foundational Play:** Use fewer mats, focus on distinct textures, offer guided exploration, or sort into two simple piles (e.g., "Soft" vs. "Not Soft").
- **Extended Play:** Try blindfolded sorting, require verbal justification for placement, or challenge them to create their own sorting criteria.



Memory Challenge!

Goal: Listen carefully, remember the sequence, and put your CareSquare mats in the correct order!

Boosts: Memory, sequencing, following instructions, and tactile discrimination.

Initial Setup

Lay out the CareSquares to be used for the round. Make sure they are easily accessible.

How to Play (Single Player Game)

- **The Challenge:** An adult will either verbally announce or visually display the sequence of CareSquares for a short time; describe each square using its characteristics. For example, "Your order is: Red, then bumpy, then silver!"
- **Place in Order:** The child's goal is to pay attention closely, then pick up the corresponding squares and place them down in the order called/displayed.
- **Check Your Memory:** The adult then reveals the correct sequence (either by repeating it or showing a pre-written list). Compare to see if it is right!
- **New Round, New Sequence:** Mix up the mats and start a new round with a different order!

Adaptations

- **Complex Learners:** Place two or three squares in sequence so the child can see, feel and hear/see prompts. Then remove the squares and show one square at a time, asking if that square came first, second or third.
- **Foundational Play:** Start with sequences of fewer squares; use mats with very distinct characteristics (e.g., bright color, unique texture); and keep flashcards visible, or allow the child to repeat the order or confirm placement.
- **Extended Play:** Give longer sequences, add a gentle timer, or ask for the sequence in reverse. Add complexity by incorporating the shape cutouts. For example: "Red circle, then bumpy triangle, then silvery heart!"



6

Shape & Texture Match

Goal: Draw cards, identify the shape and texture, and match the shape cutout to the correct CareSquare mat.

Boosts: Shape recognition, tactile discrimination, visual matching, following instructions, and communication.

Initial Setup

- **Prep-work:** Print the flashcards provided on the following pages. Shuffle the Shape Cards and Texture Cards separately, then place them face-down in two piles.
- **Get All Squares:** Spread out all 16 CareSquares (shapes and textures) on a play surface.

How to Play (Single Player Game)

- **Draw Two:** Draw one Shape Card and one Texture Card.
- **Identify:** The child identifies the shape shown on the Shape Card, and the texture shown on the Texture Card.
- **Match:** The child then finds the corresponding shape cutout and places it over the CareSquares that matches the drawn texture.
- **Communicate:** Verbally describe the match (e.g., "The circle is on the bumpy velvet!").

Adaptation

- **Complex Learners:** Introduce just two squares at a time, and focus on either shapes or textures. Have an adult assist with card drawing, then have the child indicate which square matches the card. Encourage any communication (e.g. pointing, eye gaze, AAC). Reinforce communication by using simple, repetitive language. Focus on sensory input and celebrating any interaction.
- **Foundational Play:** Use fewer mats/shapes. Focus on one card category at a time, either shape or texture). Provide strong verbal cues and physical guidance. Celebrate all engagement!
- **Extended Play:** Use all mats/shapes. Add a speed challenge. Require verbal description of drawn cards before placement.

7

Mystery Bag Detective

Goal: *Guess which square is hiding in the bag.*

Boosts: *Sharpen your senses, share vivid clues, and master descriptive words!*

Initial Setup

- **Secret Agent Prep:** In secret, place one CareSquare inside the canvas bag.
- **The Clue Pouch:** Close the canvas bag, leaving just enough space for a hand.
- **Visual Clue Board:** Lay out all CareSquare flashcards (at the end of this guide) face-up as your "suspects."

How to Play (Multi-Player Game)

- **Detective & Witnesses:** Choose one player as the Detective; others are Witnesses. For single player, the adult is the Witness and provides clues.
- **First Clue:** Hand the bag to the first Witness. They feel the square and share one vivid description (e.g., "It feels bumpy," "It has a smooth edge").
- **Detective's Guess:** The Detective listens and makes one guess. The Secret Agent (Adult) will indicate whether the guess was correct or not.
- **More Clues, More Guesses:** If wrong, the bag passes to the next Witness for a new, different description. The Detective gets another guess.
- **Solve the Mystery!** Continue until the Detective guesses correctly.
- **New Case!** Switch Detectives for more fun rounds!

Adaptations

- **Special Detectives:** Let each child feel inside the bag, exploring the mystery square. Let them make a guess if they wish, otherwise pull the texture out for a fun reveal! Use the provided flashcards to describe the texture or use your own descriptions.
- **Emerging Detectives:** To offer more support, reduce the number of flashcards on display. Fewer options make it easier to narrow down the choices.
- **Master Detectives:** Ready for a super challenge? Place two textured squares back-to-back inside the bag, or put a shape square over a textured square! The Detective must correctly identify both hidden squares at once to solve this advanced mystery!

Discovery Cards

Printable cards for matching, storytelling, descriptive language, and sensory discovery.



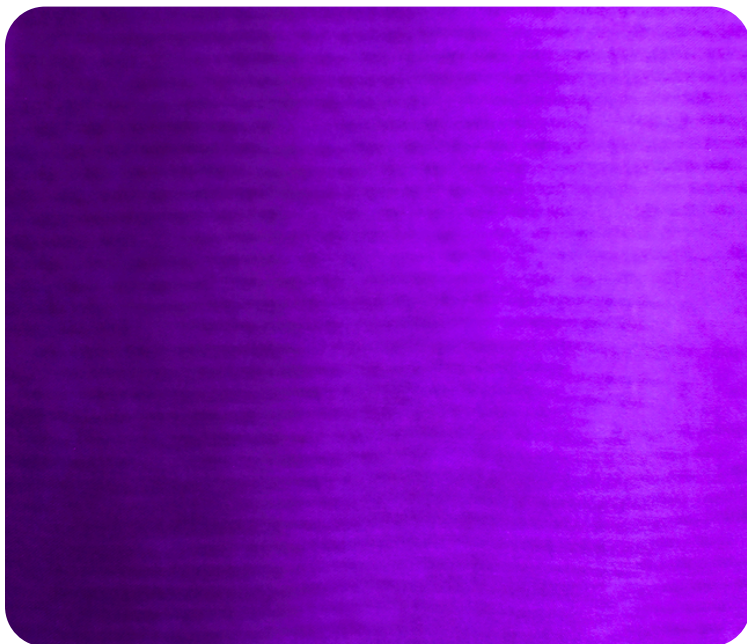
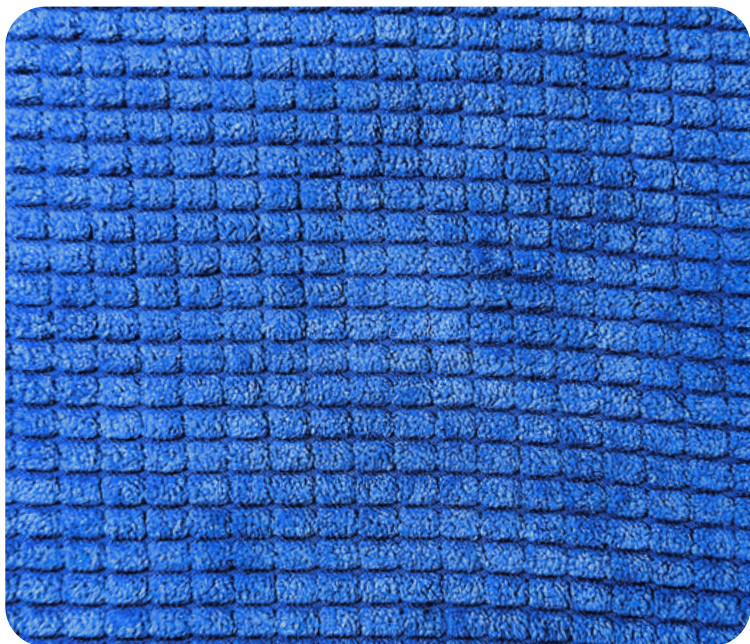
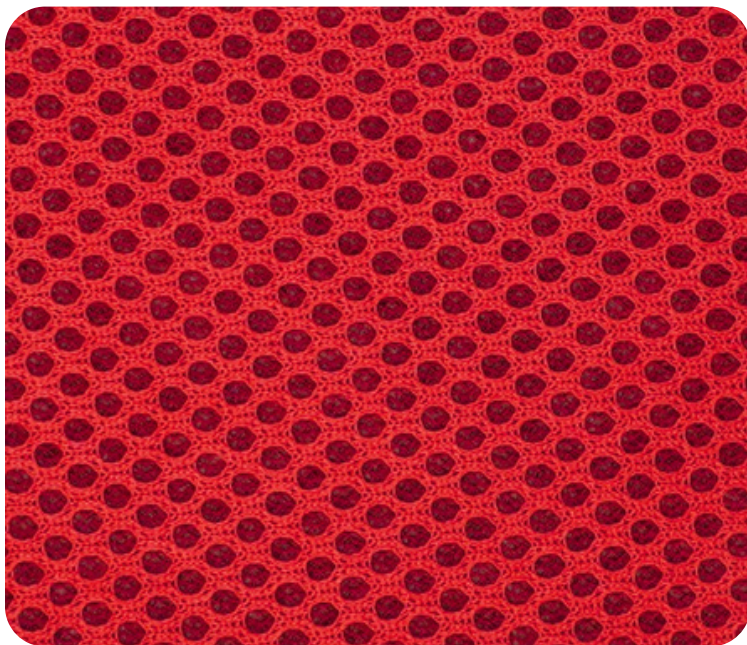
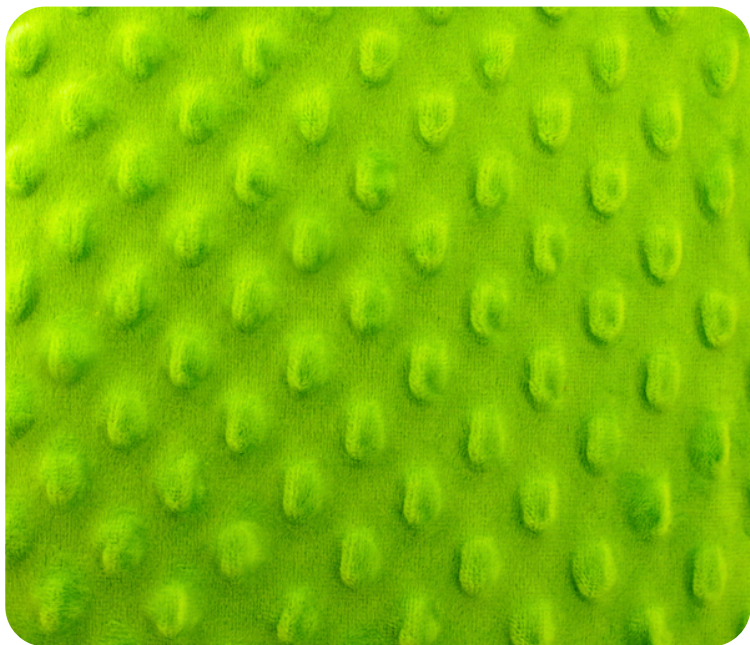
How to Use the Cards

Use the Discovery Cards for storytelling, matching games, sensory exploration, communication, and vocabulary building.

Build vocabulary by describing textures, colors, shapes, emotions, and sensory experiences together.

Encourage imaginative play through matching games, movement prompts, and storytelling activities.

Print the cards double-sided on heavy cardstock and cut along the dashed lines.





TOUCH

Soft • Fluffy • Squishy



LOOK

Yellow • Shaggy • Bright



LISTEN

Gets louder when pressed



COMPARE

Like a thick carpet or mop



TOUCH

Furry • Fuzzy • Soft



LOOK

Brown • Hair • Fluffy



LISTEN

Quiet • Muffled



COMPARE

Like a fluffy blanket



TOUCH

Spongy • Squishy • Porous



LOOK

Red • Vibrant • Netted



LISTEN

Muted • Soft



COMPARE

Like netting



TOUCH

Bumpy • Textured • Velvety



LOOK

Green • Raised • Dots



LISTEN

Bumps make flapping sound



COMPARE

Like a finger massage



TOUCH

Silky • Smooth • Slippery



LOOK

Purple • Shiny • Reflective



LISTEN

Quiet, steady sound



COMPARE

Like a silk gown



TOUCH

Corrugated • Ridged • Soft



LOOK

Blue • Gooved • Lines



LISTEN

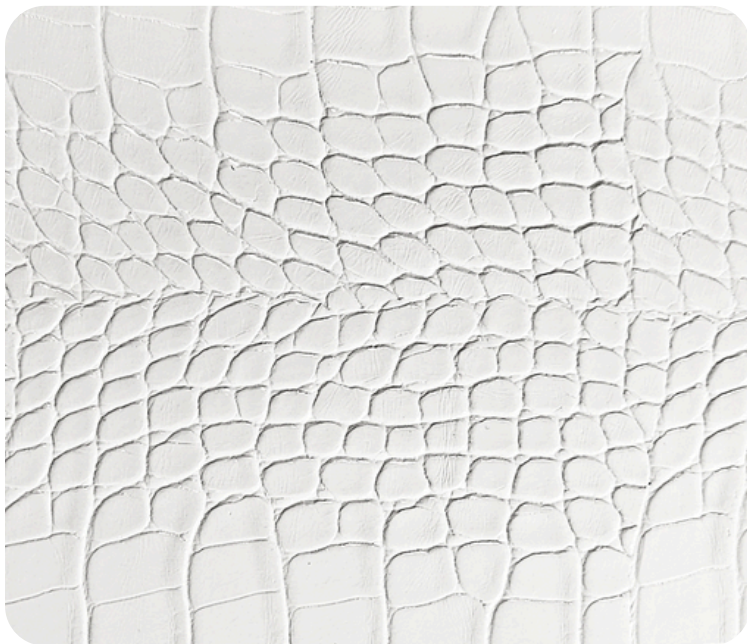
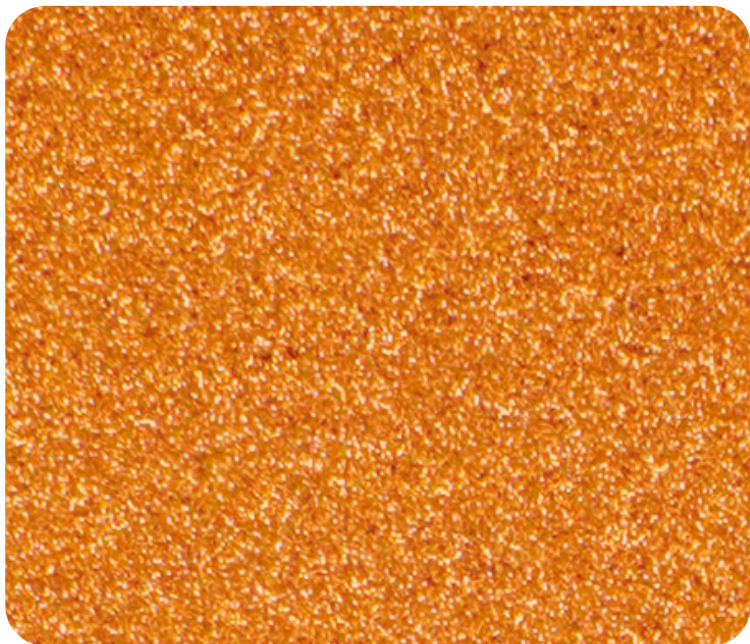
Swooshing sound



COMPARE

Like corduroy





MORE WAYS TO PLAY!

Visit our YouTube Channel
for stories, fun activities,
and learning videos.

[YouTube.com/@CarethrivingKids](https://www.youtube.com/@CarethrivingKids)





TOUCH

Scaly • Cold • Textured



LOOK

White • Squiggly • Patterned



LISTEN

Tiny Clicks • Tapping



COMPARE

Like reptile skin



TOUCH

Rough • Gritty • Grainy



LOOK

Orange • Shimmery • Sparkly



LISTEN

Scratchy • Loud



COMPARE

Like a nail file



TOUCH

Wrinkly • Scrunchy • Rough



LOOK

Silver • Shiny • Crinkled



LISTEN

Crinkly • Crackly



COMPARE

Like foil



TOUCH

Furry • Soft • Swirly



LOOK

Pink • Swirly • Rosy



LISTEN

Quiet • Muted



COMPARE

Like little roses



GROW PLAY • BUILD SKILLS • EXPLORE

The CareSquares Sensory Learning System grows with your child.



Discover themed sets that spark new interests

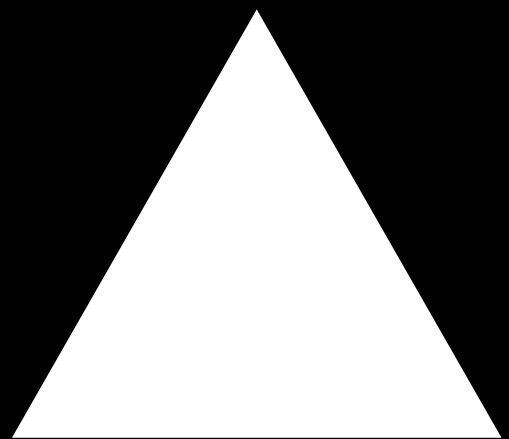
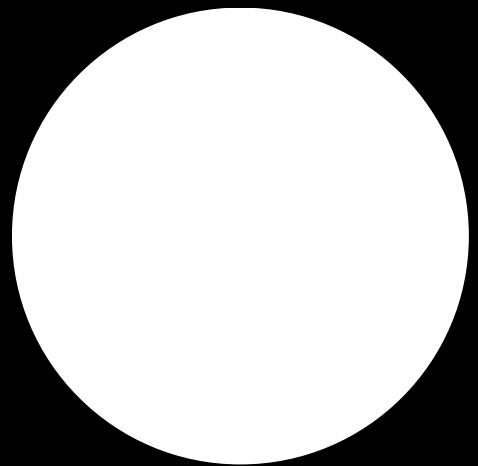
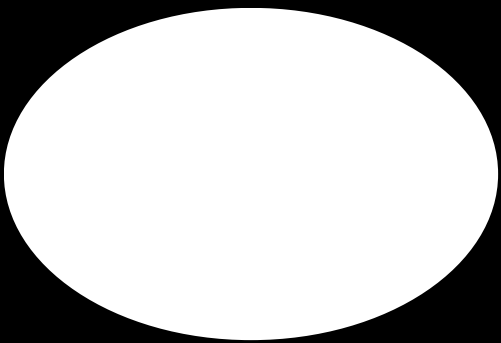
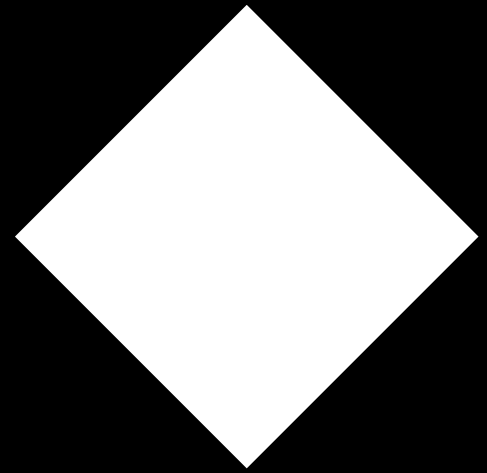
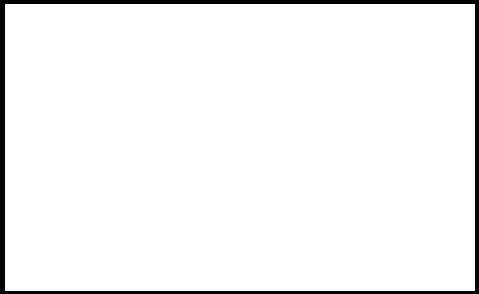


Build skills across senses and subjects



Mix, match & expand for endless play

amazon.com/carethriving



SHAPE CARD

diamond

Pointed • Slanted • Symmetrical



SHAPE CARD

rectangle

4 Sides • Long • Straight



SHAPE CARD

circle

Round • Curved • No Corners



SHAPE CARD

oval

Long • Rounded • Stretched



SHAPE CARD

triangle

3 Sides • 3 Corners • Pointy



SHAPE CARD

heart

Rounded Top • Curved • Pointed Bottom





Keep the Learning Going

Open-ended play. Endless possibilities.
Discover the full CareSquares system.



CORE SENSORY & SHAPE SET

10 colorful textures • 6 shapes
• canvas storage bag

A complete set for exploring **textures**, learning **shapes**, and encouraging hands-on **discovery**.

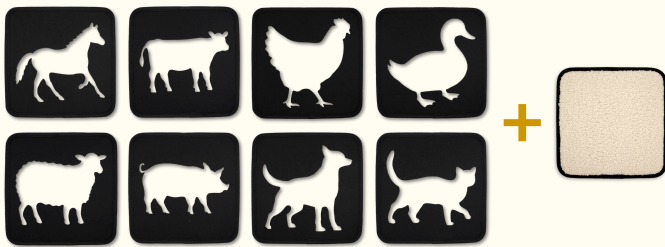
INCLUDES DIGITAL PLAY GUIDE

7 inclusive activities • printable flashcards • flexible play ideas
Print or use on a screen.

Explore more ways to play and learn!

Add a Discovery Set and bring new animals to play time.

FARM FRIENDS DISCOVERY SET



8 farm animals • 1 woolly texture

Perfect for **storytelling**, **matching**, and **imaginative play**.



INCLUDES DIGITAL PLAY GUIDE

Interactive story, game, activity pages, and flashcards.

SAFARI WILDLIFE DISCOVERY SET



8 safari animals • 1 furry texture

Inspires **curiosity**, builds **vocabulary**, and invites big **adventures**.



INCLUDES DIGITAL PLAY GUIDE

Interactive story, game, activity pages, and flashcards.

Each CareSquares Set is sold separately



SENSORY PLAY

Encourages touch, exploration, and curiosity.



LANGUAGE BUILDING

Supports vocabulary, communication, and social interactions.



DEVELOPMENT

Builds independence, focus, and creative problem solving.

More Ways to Play with CareSquares

Visit our YouTube channel for fun activities, stories, and play inspiration!



YouTube.com/@CarethrivingKids



Stories

Fun stories that spark imagination



Activities

Simple ideas to play and learn together



Play Inspiration

Encouraging creativity and learning through play



Thank you for being part of the Carethriving community!



Share your CareSquares play
@carethriving • #caresquares