



# SMART WATER PLAY IDEAS

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# SMART WATER STARTS WITH YOU!



Smart Water is a partnership between Hamilton City Council, Waipa District Council and Waitomo District Council. It aims to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of water from source to tap, and support schools, organisations, and the community to value water and use it in an efficient way.

We are privileged to have water on tap 24 hours a day, but we can't take this for granted. For the majority of people in the world, water is extremely scarce and hard to access. Even in New Zealand we can run short of water at times due to a rising population and changes in climate patterns.

Water is the life giver of all things – ko to wai ora ngā mea katoa. By using water carefully, we are protecting the health and well-being of our waterways. We are also ensuring that water is not wasted and there will be enough to go around when rain is scarce.

We know kids love to play with water so here are a few ideas to keep the fun happening but lowering the amount of water you use. Try them out, let us know what you think and share with friends and family!

**To find out more about the smart water campaign, visit [smartwater.org.nz](http://smartwater.org.nz)**



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# SMART WATER PLAY GUIDELINES

1

## Choose Smart Water play

**Ideas in this booklet limit water use but not fun!**

They often use a very small amount of water that can create hours of fun.

2

## Set a timer

**If you're using the hose or sprinkler for play, set a timer for 10 minutes max.**

Let your children know they can play until the timer goes off.

3

## Move play around your lawn

Use the drips, drops and water used for play to water your lawn when you can.

4

## Reuse

**When children are done playing with water tip it onto your lawn or plants!**

5

## Start the conversation

Let your children know that water is special, it's a natural resource that we need to look after.

**We need a new generation of Smart Water kids!**

**A SPRINKLER  
OR RUNNING HOSE**  
uses about 15 litres every minute!

2

Smart Water Play Ideas  
smartwater.org.nz

# WATERING CAN

## HAVE YOU GOT A KEEN MINI GARDENER AT HOME?

Get them involved in this low water, upcycled project.



© Royal Horticultural Society

### What you need:

- Thumb tack or hammer and small nail
- Clean milk bottle (or any plastic bottle with a lid and a handle)
- String
- **Optional:** Paint, markers, varnish.

### How to do it:

Use the thumb tack or hammer and nail to make holes in the lid. Cover the whole surface with holes.

Tie a bit of string through one of the holes and tie to the handle. This will make sure the lid doesn't get lost.

**Optional:** You child can decorate the bottle. Once the paint is dry add a varnish or transparent spray paint to give it a protective layer so the paint doesn't come off.

### Smart Water Tip:

**Watering by hand saves heaps of water.** Getting children involved is a great time to teach them about what plants to water and when to water. The best time to water plants is early morning and evening. Plants thrive if they are watered for longer but infrequently rather than frequent shallow watering.

# WINDOW ART

TODDLERS LOVE  
THIS ACTIVITY.

It's quick and easy and  
different every time!



©Happy Hooligans

## What you need:

- A window or ranch slider
- Bowl
- Paint brush
- Foam shapes, letters, number (non-adhesive).

## How to do it:

Children simply wet their brush in the bowl of water and either 'paint' the glass or paint water onto the shape. Then press to stick the foam shapes on the glass. They stay up for about an hour.

## Smart Water Tip:

**Water is limited to one bowl for this play activity, which is great!** Any left over water can be used on your garden.

# TOY CAR WASH

## SET UP A MUDDY CAR WASH FOR A MORNING FULL OF FUN!

Dirt, cars and soapy water! It will keep little car-lovers entertained for ages! Drive those cars through the mud, down the ramp, and 'splash' into a bucket of soapy water!



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### What you need:

- 2 rectangle containers (one for mud, one for the car wash)
- Soil/potting mix/sand
- A ramp (car tracks or a plank of wood work well)
- Squirt of dishwashing liquid.

### How to do it:

Make a mud pit in the container (or use a natural one in your garden). This is where the cars and trucks get muddied up!

Link this mud area with the ramp into the 'car wash'. Add a squirt of dishwashing liquid and some water.

### Smart Water Tip:

Water your plants with the left over water, just avoid your edible garden plants.

# DINOSAUR DIG

**YOU CAN USE ALL THE TOYS YOU ALREADY HAVE AND NATURAL ITEMS FOR THIS ACTIVITY. ALL YOU NEED IS A FREEZER TO FREEZE A BLOCK OF WATER.**

This does take some preparation but is great for birthdays or family gatherings when there's lots of children to entertain.



## What you need to make the ice block:

- Toys and objects to go in the ice block (see below for ideas)
- Large ice cream tub to freeze – use a cake ring for a smaller end result.

## What the children will need to melt the ice block:

- Salt shaker coloured with a few drops of blue food colouring (salt makes ice melt faster! See it in action above).
- Small paté spreaders so they can dig the ice
- Syringes
- Plastic test tubes
- Turkey baster
- Tweezers
- Bowl of hot water
- Anything that they will be able to use to chip away at the ice!



## Ideas of what you can add to the ice:

- Dinosaurs / cars / farm animals
- Stones / shells / drift wood
- Decorative glass pebbles / plastic crystals
- Buttons / treasure / plastic pearls
- Glitter
- Anything!



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## How to do it:

For best results, freeze your ice in layers over the course of a couple of days. Add a few items to the water, place the container in the freezer and repeat with another layer when the previous one is frozen.

To get the ice block out, run the container under hot water for a short time, it should pop right out. Place the ice block in a larger container to make sure you collect the melting water.

Children enjoy using tools to get into the dig. Anything will be fun, especially squirting things like syringes or turkey basters.

### Smart Water Tip:

Children keep cool handling ice on a hot day and only a small amount of water is needed.

# RUNNING WATER STATION

HERE'S AN EASY WAY TO ADD RUNNING WATER TO ANY OUTDOOR PLAY SPACE, WITHOUT LETTING YOUR KIDS LOOSE ON THE HOSE.

Children can use the water for any play activities like tea parties, mud kitchen, sensory soups and for washing up too! But the amount of water used is up to you.

Kids love having complete control over that simple, little tap. Cranking that handle can be a bit tricky. It requires strength and co-ordination to turn the tap off and on, but they work together and help each other to make it happen.



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## What you need:

- Camping water container or similar 20 litre water container with tap
- A 'catch it' container to catch any spilled water.

## Smart Water Tip:

Water your plants with the left over water, just avoid your edible garden plants.

# SENSORY SOUP OR FAIRY TEA

KIDS CAN ENJOY WATER PLAY WITH FLOWERS AND OTHER TREASURES FROM THE GARDEN AND STRENGTHEN THEIR CUTTING SKILLS.

©Happy Hooligans

## What you need:

- Food colouring
- Herbs
- Edible petals, or greens from the garden
- Slices of colourful fruit
- Pebbles and buttons
- **Optional:** edible glitter, in case they get carried away and drink it!
- Large mixing bowl / container
- Soup ladle, whisk, small bowls and cups
- Scissors.

## How to do it:

Fill the large bowl, add the food colouring, set out the rest of the equipment. Encourage children to explore the garden to add special flavours to the soup.

### Smart Water Tip:

Pour the water through a sieve and water your plants when finished.



# CHALK WATER COLOUR PAVEMENT PAINTING

THIS ACTIVITY USES VERY  
LITTLE WATER AND IS GREAT  
FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN OR  
MORE ADVANCED ARTISTS!



©Happy Hooligans

## What you need:

- Chalk (find the larger sticks at the discount store)
- Wide paint brushes
- Small water container for wetting the brushes.

## How to do it:

Let the children draw with the chalk. Encourage them to use lots of colours and different designs. It works best if the chalk covers the whole area.

Paint water over the chalk drawings. This is a great way to use those old paintbrushes that are too scruffy to use for home-decorating projects anymore.

## Smart Water Tip:

**Children love playing with water** – this activity enables them to get creative and use adult paint brushes at the same time.

# SPONGE WATER BOMBS

## SICK OF TRYING TO PICK UP ALL THE RUBBER WATER BALLOONS AFTER THE LAST PARTY?

Spend a few minutes to make these sponge water bombs. They can be reused and save you from water balloon litter! They're great fun for all ages, even teenagers.

### What you need:

- Sponges, look for thicker ones
- Good scissors
- Strong string, or cable ties
- Two buckets.

### How to do it:

Cut your sponges into long fingers. Then use string/cable ties to secure in the middle. If using cable ties, make sure you trim the remainder off, to remove the risk of scratching.

Place two buckets (half full) in different areas of your garden and let the children go wild! They can make rules, set home bases – the possibilities are endless!



©Rachel Hollis

### Smart Water Tip:

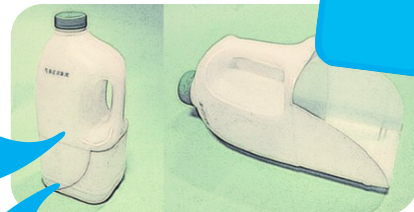
#### When sprinkler restrictions are in place

– this is a great alternative activity to keep children entertained and cool in summer.

# RECYCLED WATER WALL

WITH A FEW DIY SKILLS AND SOME MATERIALS FROM YOUR RECYCLING BIN YOU CAN PROVIDE HOURS OF LEARNING AND ENTERTAINMENT FOR YOUR TODDLER WITH ONE BUCKET OF WATER USED!

If you are lacking in DIY skills, cable ties or a staple gun might work for you to secure the bottles and pipes.



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## What you need:

- A fence (or an old door, outdoor table, BBQ trolley, left over garden lattice – anything that works!)
- Empty plastic bottles, containers, pipes, plant pots
- Screws, staple gun, or cable ties (depending on your DIY ability or durability required)
- Large bin to be the water collector.

## How to do it:

Attach your bottles, tubes and containers in a way that allows water to flow from one to another.

Cutting an opening length ways on soft drink bottles is a good tip. Also a milk bottle with the bottom cut off makes a great scoop.

## Smart Water Tip:

Place a large bin or a bucket at the bottom to collect all the water so the same water can be re-used many times down the water wall.



# SMART WATER TIPS OUTDOORS

- 👉 **The best time to water your plants is early morning and evening.**
- 👉 **Use mulch around your plants** - it will stop 70% of water evaporating from the soil. For best results, mulch to at least 75-100mm deep.
- 👉 **Plants love infrequent and long watering rather than frequent shallow watering.** This encourages the roots to grow deeper into the soil, making your plants stronger and happier in hot weather.
- 👉 **Consider putting in a dripper line or soaker hose system.** They're great watering systems for shrubs, plants and vegetables as the water gets straight to the root zone and is not lost to evaporation.
- 👉 **Let your lawn grow a little longer in the summer months.** This will help keep it stay looking green and lush.
- 👉 **Re-use the water** from your kitchen bowl or laundry to water your plants.
- 👉 **Buy drought tolerant plants** that don't need a lot of watering.
- 👉 **Wash your car on an area of lawn.**

**For more water saving gardening tips visit**  
**[smartwater.org.nz/garden](http://smartwater.org.nz/garden)**



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aims to make long-term change to how we use water  
and is a joint venture between Hamilton City Council,  
Waipā District Council and Waitomo District Council.



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