

Snails (1 hour)

Welcome to Snails class! In this class, our main focus is proprioception (heavy work) and tactile stimulation. We will move “like snails” and make slime at the end.

How to structure class:

- Meet together in a circle time. Perform your desired circle time introduction.
- Read a book of your choosing related to snails (see what your local library has before purchasing books!)
 - [*Snail-Snaily-Snails*](#)
 - [*Snails! A My Incredible World Picture Book for Children*](#)
 - [*Are You a Snail?*](#)
 - [*Slimy Snails*](#)
- Ask questions related to snails.
 - Has anyone ever seen a snail?
 - What does a snail look like?
 - Where do you think snails live?
 - Do snails move fast or slow?
- Use different movements to showcase fast vs. slow (running, crawling, jumping, walking in different directions, hopping, etc). Ask kids to suggest movements. Emphasize that snails move slowly when compared to other animals.
- Share facts about snails throughout class
 - Snails leave slime behind them as they move, it helps to protect them.
 - Snails are nocturnal.
 - Snails don't have a backbone.
 - If a snail is disturbed or afraid, it will withdraw into its shell.
 - Snails do not change shells when they grow, the shell grows with them.
 - The snail has a very unique form of movement in which it actually contracts its one foot muscle to move.
- Ask if anyone has seen anything that maybe could be used like a “shell” or a “home” to protect them. Walk to find the “shells.”
- Find the shells (boxes), tape them to the kids' backs (if they desire), or have kids carry/push the box back to the initial circle time area.
- Walk back to the circle time slowly (a snail's pace)
- Take all of the boxes and have the kids build a box fort/home together with the materials available- to “protect them” like a snail's shell would. Allow free play, help as needed.
- During the last 10 minutes, bring out the slime that was previously prepared (recipe below). Allow kids to play with it freely, folding it over and squishing it, picking things out or putting things in the slime.
- Conclude with your desired ending/circle time.

Things covered in this class:

Gross Motor Skills: Walking down a path to search for snail “shells.” Taping the shells to the kids’ backs (if desired) OR carrying/pushing the shell in any way the child would like. Full body functional movements occur. On a smaller level, the activity of crawling with a box on their back could help with rotational core musculature whereas building a box fort will help with dynamic balance and core strength, likely at different levels.

Fine Motor Skills: Allow the child to try to peel and rip the tape as able, allow them to tape what they can to their shell as you help attach it to their body. Pinching, squishing, and squeezing the slime will also target fine motor skills.

Sensory Play: By pushing and carrying boxes, this is causing our muscles to contract and compress our joints via heavy work. This activity involves proprioception, which helps to release Serotonin and make us feel safe. We also involve our tactile sense when playing with slime. Tactile stimulation releases dopamine and helps to rid our bodies of stress. I like to end classes with more sensory play in order to release these feel-good hormones as well as allow children to re-regulate themselves this way.

Optional extras: Decorate boxes with different textures, shapes, colors, numbers, pictures, or letters to add an extra educational component. Examples: S for snail, number boxes and stack them in order, use a fuzzy material and sort boxes by fuzzy vs smooth.

Items needed for the class: Boxes of various sizes for “shells” and building a box fort/home. Painters tape. Different materials to build a fort (your choice - sticks, more tape, sheets, rubber bands, etc - be creative!), slime.

Optional items: Small items (beads, etc) to put into the slime. Tongs to pick things out of slime. Other decorations (stickers, markers).

How to Adapt:

For an individual: If you are completing this class at home with your children, it absolutely can be broken into 3 different 15 minute parts that you may do in one day or over the course of one week:

- Finding and taping a shell to the child, decorate it. Pretend to move like a snail with it on their back, push the box, carry the box in different ways. (15 minutes+)
- Build a home with various boxes, decorate it. (15 minutes+)
- Make and play with slime. Allow your child to help create the slime. Add small things into the slime (age dependent). Use tongs, fingers, tweezers to pick things out of the slime. (15 minutes+)

For a child who cannot walk yet: Crawling is another way a child could move to/from the boxes. If a child can push a box while crawling, great! This could also be performed inside on a

surface that would make a box easier to slide (place a towel underneath and push the box on a tile/wood floor instead).

- If the child is able to sit or stand with support, place items just out of reach to help them work on their core strength and balance by reaching outside of their base of support.
- A child can build with smaller boxes while sitting or standing.

Additional Resources:

- Go out and look for snails in your backyard, a local park, or a local community garden.
- Check out some videos online such as [this one](#) showing a snail moving for additional reinforcement

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Nature Movement Classes