Sensory Lab

Lina Learns to Wash Her Hands



A free picture book to read together

Read it before the routine, one page at a time.

Created by Sensory Lab

This book belongs to

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How to read this book together

- Read it at a calm time, or just before washing hands, as a preview of what will happen.
- Point to each picture and pause. Give your child time to look, point or show you.
- Read the same way each time. Familiar words help the routine feel safe.
- Short on time or energy? Read only the pages your child likes, or see the fewer-steps idea at the back of the book.



Lina and Sami played in the garden.

Their hands are muddy.



Mum shows Lina a picture card.

First wash hands, then snack.



First, Mum washes her own hands.

Lina watches.



Lina wets her hands with water.

Then one press of soap.



Lina copies Mum. Rub, rub, rub!

Palms, then the backs of her hands.



Mum gently helps Lina’s fingers.

Clean in between each finger.



Thumbs and fingertips too.

Mum hums a song while they wash.



Now Lina rinses the soap on her own.

Mum waits and smiles.

There’s no rush.



Lina dries her hands with her towel.



Clean hands! Lina shows Mum.

Mum smiles: “Well done, Lina!”



Before dinner, Lina washes with Dad.

Same steps, every time.

For parents: how this book teaches

Lina's story follows four simple ideas you can use at home. Go at your child's pace: every child is different.

1. Show first (demonstration)

Stand or kneel beside your child at the basin and wash your own hands slowly, one step at a time. Your child learns by watching. You don't need many words.

2. Same steps, every time (repetition)

Wash hands at the same moments each day, such as after the toilet and before eating. A picture card ("first wash hands, then snack") helps your child know what comes next.

3. Gentle help, only if your child is happy with it

If your child likes it, rest your hands lightly over theirs to show the rubbing movement. Never hold or force. If your child pulls away, stop, and go back to watching and copying.

4. Step back slowly (gradual independence)

Help a little less each time: from guiding the movement, to pointing at the next step, to simply watching and smiling. Celebrate the trying, not perfection.

Independence takes time

Even while your child is learning to wash on their own, they may still need an adult's help to get their hands properly clean, especially between the fingers, the thumbs and the fingertips. That's normal.

Sensory-friendly ideas

- Some children find the feel of water or soap, or the sound of the tap, hard. Check the water is a comfortable warm temperature, and try a foam soap pump or a soft towel.
- Let your child choose their soap or towel. Every way your child communicates counts: looking, pointing, a picture card, a device or speech.

Fewer steps

If the whole book is too much, read only pages 6 (water and soap), 7 (rubbing), 10 (rinsing), 11 (drying).

NHS advice: how to wash your hands (UK)

- Wet your hands, use enough soap to cover them, and rub all over: palms, backs of hands, between the fingers, thumbs and fingertips.
- Wash for around 20 seconds, about as long as singing "Happy Birthday" twice. Rinse, then dry your hands completely.
- Wash after using the toilet, before eating or handling food, after blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing, and after touching animals.

Source: NHS, "How to wash your hands" (nhs.uk; page last reviewed 27 January 2023), checked 1 November 2026.

Thank you for reading with Lina

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