

Creating Together!

Art-Based Activities for You and Your Child

Having fun with your child while trying different art activities doesn't mean you need to have any background in creating art yourself - it's not about making great art! For parents and their pre-school children it is about exploring new materials and activities together and having fun.

One way of playing creatively together is to let your child take the creative lead. Follow or copy whatever mark-making method they are using - whether it is scribbles, dots, swirls, circles, drips or blobs that they are making, they will love having you follow their example. Materials such as crayons, markers, paint and brushes, finger-paint, play-dough, modeling clay (plasticine – for the 3 to 4 year-olds), and pottery clay are all examples of art materials that you can play and experiment with together.

Why make art together? Here are some of the benefits that your child can enjoy from simple creative art activities with you: development of self-expression, building of self-esteem, development of confidence and sense of self-mastery, growth of fine and gross motor skills, speech and language skill development, and reduction of feelings of anxiety and stress.

This handout contains information on the developmental stages of children's art-making to give you an idea of what children are able to do and when, ideas for creative activities for you and your child to try at home, a word about the use of different art materials, and finally a few play-dough recipes to try making at home with your child.

Children's Developmental Stages of Art-Making *

Just as children must crawl before they can walk, children must scribble before they can draw! Here is a quick overview of the developmental stages in children's art making. Art-making development often follows a one-step-forward-two-steps-back rhythm as children experiment, explore, and discover. Children will move through the stages at their own individual pace just as when they are learning to walk and talk.

- **Manipulating - Age 12 to 24 Months**

In this first stage of art-making, children will mark, smear, model, and even try to construct using art materials. Lots of supervision is required at this stage in art-making as your child is still learning appropriate ways to explore new objects. During this stage your child is becoming aware that it *is he or she* who has made the mark on the paper or squeezed the clay into a shape. Slowly, this awareness leads your child into being interested in what is being made and not just the making process.

- **Forming - Age 24 to 36 Months**

In the Forming stage children begin to intentionally use the art materials, repeating and practicing their control over them, making dots and scribbles, and then lines and blocks of colour. With play dough, your child will pound and squeeze it and experiment with how it can be shaped. Eventually, your child begins to create intentional shapes. At first these shapes won't look like anything adults might recognize but to your child they represent something specific that they have in mind.

- **Naming - Age 36 to 48 Months - A Magical Time!**

In the Naming stage, children begin to take interest in naming what it is they are creating. The shapes your child creates to represent something may change and shift as they are still experimenting with self-expression and mastery of materials. Just as in the Forming stage, the shapes your child names may not look representational (like the real thing) to adults. This is because in the naming stage, it is about your child's association to the form or shape at that particular moment when they created it. Go with the flow and show your interest and support by asking them questions about why they chose that colour or shape today. Ask your child if you can try making one like they have made. Meet them at the art-making stage that they are at!

- **Representing - Age 48 to 72 Months - The Magic Continues!**

In the Representing stage we begin to see an element of reality enter children's artwork. The shapes are often hard to recognize for adult eyes and are mixed with lots of non-representational shapes but more and more we start to see elements of the real world. The most frequent early subject is the human figure, with great variations on the shape of, number of, and size of, heads, bodies, and arms and legs. Encourage your child to tell you about who or what they have drawn. Your encouragement will inspire them to experiment and practice, knowing that you are interested in what they are learning to create.

* From *Child Art Therapy* by Judith Rubin ©2005

Art Activity Ideas For You and Your Child To Explore Together

Tip: before you start an art project, tape several layers of newspaper to your table top for faster clean-up afterwards.

- ***sponge-brush painting***

Cut a sponge into several pieces that can be dipped in paint and then dabbed or dragged across some paper (pads of newsprint paper are available at the Dollar store in your area as well as bottles of tempera paint).

- ***chalk drawing***

Try using coloured chalk on black construction paper.

- ***wheel-tracks***

Choose a small toy car, truck or train that can be run through a small pool of paint on a plate and then run the wheels over a sheet a paper.

- ***sculpting***

Using play dough or clay, experiment with your child making simple shapes such as balls or strings of dough or clay while squeezing, flattening, and rolling the material. Encourage your child to describe how the materials feels as they shape it. This activity helps your child to understand that they are able to give shape to objects in their own unique way.

- ***collage***

For children that can manage scissors and glue, cut out shapes of coloured construction paper together or images from magazines (ask your library if they have any magazines headed for the recycling bin) to tell a story or to say something about themselves.

For younger children, use pre-cut shapes that you have prepared for them and together, place them onto clear sticky-backed paper (available at office supply stores to cover books) that you have taped onto a sheet of paper. Add to the collage with markers, crayons or paints if desired.

- ***hand-in-hand***

Begin by tracing the outline of your hand (with fingers spread) on a piece of paper. Next, have your child place her or his hand within your outline and trace the outline of their hand. Then, colour or paint or draw something to fill in the two hand outlines together. This is a great activity to bring you physically close together on a shared project especially if your child had a difficult day.

- ***body outline***

Using either a sheet of newsprint that is as tall as your child, or two pieces of bristol board taped together, tape the paper to the wall or a door so that your child may but their back against it (or lay it on the floor and have then lie down on it). Next, draw an outline of their body with a marker.

Then use markers, crayons, and paints to fill in their eyes, nose, mouth etc. If you have some yarn, string, or fabric and white glue this can be used for hair and clothing. This activity is a great way to celebrate your child's uniqueness and to increase their body-awareness.

A Word About Art Materials

As you experiment with different creative activities and art materials you may notice that your child responds a certain way to some materials. Noticing how your child reacts to different art materials, when they are in different moods, can be very helpful information for a parent.

For instance, liquid tempera paint (the kind used most often with children and available at the Dollar store) may make an already excited child overly excited, or child in a shy, quiet mood may respond to using paint by becoming more talkative. Clay, play dough, or plasticine can soothe some children but may energize others. Activities that involve gluing or pasting paper materials to one another can help a child re-establish closeness with an adult or other child. Materials such as markers or chalk pastels (available at art stores, Zellers, Wal-Mart) that let a child express himself or herself quickly by covering a lot of space with lots of colour fast, can help a frustrated child express their feelings.

Finally, the size of the paper used can also have an effect on how your child will respond to a creative activity. Small (8 1/2" x 11") paper is sometimes just right, but might also restrict how much the child can express. Larger pieces of paper can help inspire a child to create something fast and with lots of feeling but it can also seem like a huge job to a child to fill a large piece of paper. If possible, offer two sizes of paper or, on a large sheet of paper, use a black marker and draw a border for your child to work within.

Play-Dough Recipes

Both of these play dough recipes are no-cook recipes so try making the play-dough together. Making the play-dough together can be part of the creative fun!

No-Cook Play-Dough

Ingredients:

- * 4 cups flour
- * 1 cup salt
- * 2 Tbs. cooking oil
- * 1 to 1 1/2 cups cold water

Mix flour, salt, oil. Gradually add water to flour mixture. Knead. Store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

Kool-Aid Play-Dough

Follow the same recipe as the No-Cook Play-Dough but mix the Kool-Aid packet into the water before adding it to the flour mixture.

For more information or if you have any questions please feel free to contact us.

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