

## Children's Art

Art is very important to young children. It gives them a way to let out their feelings and ideas.

Children can learn a lot through art. As children draw, paint, and make collages, they are learning about their world (colors, shapes, and sizes of objects). When they use paints, glue, and markers, children are planning, trying out new things, and solving problems. As children mix paints, they learn to understand one thing can make changes in another. Art lets children make choices.

Children don't need to make a finished product to learn from art. This is sometimes hard for adults to understand. For young children, what they are doing is most important, not what they make.

### Art as a Process

Art should be a time to allow the children to express their ideas and experiment with materials. Focus on helping children develop their creativity and enjoy the process of expressing thoughts and feelings through art. Guide, model, and show skills and techniques that can be used to create without teaching. Give children time and places to be creative, explore, express themselves, and experiment. Provide safe and interesting materials for children to use on their own.

Communicate with young children about the process of art. Use insightful open-ended comments that will encourage each child to explore. Avoid general comments that sound as if you are evaluating the children's artwork, such as "That's pretty!" or "I like your bright picture!" Instead encourage children to reflect on their creations ("Tell me about your artwork"), talk about what they did ("I see you mixed many colors"), or comment on specific features of their artwork ("Look at the bright orange circle you drew").

Art should be a time to allow the child's ideas to come out. Crafts tend to limit a child's creative ideas. The activities listed below do not allow a child to be creative.

### Try to avoid using these:

- Coloring books or printed pages to color.
- Creating a craft project for the children to see and make the same thing.
- Patterns to follow or lines to cut on.
- Telling a child what to draw, paint, or make.
- Finishing a child's work or telling a child to finish it to make it better.
- Drawing things for children.

Children show their feelings and ideas through art.

### The Best Art for Children

The best art for children is to present the art materials and let them explore them in their own ways. Let the children choose how they want to use the materials. They will learn more and enjoy art more when they can make their own artwork. No two art projects will be alike.



To an adult, great children's artwork often looks a lot like scribbles, lines, and even a mess on paper! Children learn by making these lines, scribbles, and messes. It's what they are doing that's most important.

# Lots of Ideas for Painting

You can spend a whole year letting children explore with paint. Change the activities by letting children work with different papers, painting tools, and paints.

What children do with art is more important than what is made.

## Try different papers

- poster papers of different colors, sizes, and shapes
- tissue papers of different colors, sizes, and shapes
- cardboard of different colors, sizes, and shapes
- newsprint
- Sunday newspaper comics (try painting them with water)
- wet and dry papers
- bubble wrap (great for finger painting)
- paper bags
- paper plates
- pizza boxes
- wall paper
- wax paper
- wrapping paper
- aluminum foil
- freezer paper
- junk mail

## Try changing the paint

### **Add these to make different textures**

- Add liquid soap to make paint slimy
- Add salt or sugar to make paint sparkle
- Add corn syrup to make paint shiny and sticky
- Add flour to make paint lumpy
- Add sand to make paint bumpy
- Add sawdust or coffee grinds to make paint clumpy
- Add a scent to the paint – a few drops of perfume or cooking extracts

## Try different painting tools

- sponges
- twigs, sticks, or leaves
- dandelions
- pine tree branches
- grass
- eyedroppers
- cotton balls
- clean fly swatters
- tooth brushes
- paint brushes (thin, thick, narrow, wide)
- popsicle sticks
- dish cleaners
- wire egg beaters
- vegetable and pastry brushes
- rolling pins
- combs
- rubber balls
- squeeze bottles
- ice cubes
- feathers
- plastic forks
- cotton swabs
- hair rollers
- coffee stir sticks
- corks
- toy cars and trucks
- kitchen tools
- body parts (elbows, fingers, noses, feet, knees, etc.)
- rocks
- yarn

## Resources

*Don't Move the Muffin Tins: A Hands-off Guide to Art for the Young Child* by Bev Bos

*Make Your Own Playdough, Paint, and Other Craft Materials: Easy Recipes to Use with Young Children* by Patricia Caskey

*Art: Basic for Young Children* by Lila Lasky and Rose Mukerji-Bergeson

*The Story in the Picture: Inquiry and Artmaking with Young Children* by Christine Mulcahey

*Exploring Art: Create It – Display It* by Liz and Dick Wilmes

*Paint Without Brushes* by Liz and Dick Wilmes

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