

13. Messy play

Time needed

30+ mins

Messy Play

Messy play can involve the use of water, jelly, paints, play dough, mud, sand and other materials. It encourages young children to explore different textures and materials in a creative way, allowing them to use their own imagination. It also stimulates the senses. During messy play, young children are developing eye-hand coordination and fine motor skills. What looks like a mess on the surface is truly a learning experience for your child. You'll need to supervise your child to keep fingers out of mouths!

What you need

Any of: paint and brushes or stamps, rice crispies, corn flakes, pasta or spaghetti (dried or cooked), washing powder, jelly cubes, flour or corn flour, food colouring, food flavouring, shaving foam, hair gel, shredded paper, glitter, cold custard, old cards for cutting and sticking or any other item or material you can think of as long as it is safe and sensible to use.



What to do

There are so many things you can do. All you need is imagination. Here are a few suggestions:

Painting

- Use sponges, fingers, hands, feet and other objects to make marks on a variety of surfaces including paper, cardboard and boxes.
- Roll out old wallpaper in the garden and encourage children to make footprints across the paper – mix colours, compare feet sizes, etc.
- Use washing-up bottles filled with watery paint to squeeze and spray across paper.



Sand and water play

- Use various bottles, jugs, scoops, sieves, funnels, tools and containers. Filling various containers with water or dry sand gives children the experience of feeling different weights.
- Pouring from one container to another introduces the relationships of capacity and volume. Children love to explore floating and sinking. Damp sand feels different to dry sand; let your child explore both.
- Water and sand can be mixed together in a variety of ways. Encourage your child to choose toys, material and equipment to add or remove. Encourage them to take the lead but be prepared to get wet and dirty!