

Infants and Toddlers: Sensory Art Experiences

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The Experience of Exploration

Creative art is a sensory experience for infants and toddlers. It is about the process of exploration – not about making a product.

The experience of exploration brings an appreciation for the various materials that are being used and what can be done with them. Materials have various attributes (e.g. textures, smells) and it is fun for young children to explore all of those.

The process of discovering through the senses is what is most important. Infants and toddlers delight in opportunities to participate in sensory art experiences every day!

Inappropriate Sensory Art Activities – Things to AVOID

- Coloring books or coloring pages.
- Providing patterns or models for children to copy or imitate.
- Stencils or other materials that limit creativity.
- Activities where the adult does most of the work (such as cutting, pasting, stapling, drawing, manipulating materials).
- Telling a child what to draw, what to paint, or what to make.
- Expecting that a child will produce something recognizable or will make an imitation of a real object. Young children are not making products – they are enjoying the process.
- Finishing a child's work to make it "better." Once an adult has manipulated the child's work, it is no longer the child's experience or the child's work -- it now belongs to the adult.

What are appropriate sensory art materials and experiences for **YOUNG INFANTS**?

- Variety of textured fabrics to explore such as flannel, corduroy, satin, silk, taffeta, netting, knits, denim, lace, fur
- Variety of non-toxic papers to explore such as waxed paper, butcher paper, rice paper, tissue paper, cellophane
- Crumple, tear, shred and wave activities



What are appropriate sensory art materials and experiences for **MOBILE INFANTS** (infants who can move around on their own)?

- Finger paint (painting directly with their hands)
- Paint on trays (no paper)
 - Paint with water
 - Use stubby brushes (5-6 inches long) for painting
- Draw using jumbo crayons and large pieces of chalk
- Use large pieces of sturdy paper for drawing or painting
- Paint with water or draw with chalk outdoors on buildings, sidewalks, blacktops, or tree trunks
- Use soft, pliable playdough that can be easily manipulated with hands (no tools needed)

What are appropriate sensory art materials and experiences for TODDLERS?

- Toddlers may prefer to stand or sit when painting – vary the experiences
- Paint using paintbrushes (flat bristle brushes – nylon hair) with stubby handles
- Draw using large, stubby crayons, large pieces of chalk, or water-based felt-tip markers
- Use large pieces of sturdy paper
- Use butcher paper, newsprint, manila paper - in various sizes and shapes
- Finger painting on trays, mirrored surfaces, plastic wrap, or large pieces of paper taped to the floor or a table
- Use commercial finger paint or dry (tempra) paint mixed with liquid starch
- Make goop or gak
- Use non-toxic shaving cream
- Provide both white and colored paper with various textures for exploration or tearing activities
- Provide different textures and colors for all experiences
- Can use an eye dropper to add coloring to experiences (good when using corn starch to fingerpaint)
- Provide soft, pliable playdough – easy to manipulate without tools
- Provide utensils to extend experiences such as a potato masher, blocks, scoops, etc.

Note: When you first offer paint, limit paint to one or two colors. Gradually, add more colors but only one at a time.

What are appropriate sensory art materials and experiences for TWO-YEAR-OLDS?

- Drawing and painting
- Provide different types (colors, shapes, textures, sizes) of paper (poster paper, tissue paper, crepe paper, corrugated cardboard, butcher paper, newsprint,)
- Use fingerpaint paper coated with liquid starch & sugar water (great for chalk creations)
- In addition to brushes, add – feathers, twigs, eye-droppers, foam brushes, toothbrushes, vegetable brushes, sponges
- Add texture & smell to painting experiences:

Adding this:

Flour
Corn Syrup
Sand/Sawdust
Epson Salt
Liquid Soap

Makes paint:

Lumpy
Shiny and Sticky
Rough and Gritty
Sparkly
Slimy

- Printing: Make your own stamp pads by gluing felt onto plastic trays
- Add rubber stamps, sponges, corks, soles of old shoes, potato masher to print making experiences
- Collages: Collect colorful yarn, ribbons, papers, magazines/catalogs, material scraps, recycled materials – make 3-D collages
- Use liquid glue
- Use small, blunt-nosed scissors, if appropriate

Considerations for Successful Experiences/Activities

- Locate the sensory art experience area near a sink
- Protect the floor and other surfaces
- Protect children's clothing (or have sets of clothing that are only used for art experiences)
- Provide surfaces at different heights – children enjoy art activities standing or sitting at tables as well as on the floor
- Keep only the materials being used by the children within reach (keep all other materials out of reach of the children)
- Display art materials for toddlers and twos on a low shelf – only keep a few materials available at a time
- Display children's artwork – visually – for all to enjoy (without manipulating the artwork – keep it exactly as the children made it)



Resources:

Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos by Dodge, Rudick & Berke, Washington DC: Teaching Strategies

Tender Care and Early Learning, Supporting Infants and Toddlers in Child Care Settings by Post & Hohmann, Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press

Infants and Toddlers: Sensory Art Recipes

Scribble Wafers

Materials:

- Old crayon pieces, broken into small segments
- Muffin Tin
- Oven

Directions:

1. Pre-heat oven to 350° F.
2. Once pre-heated, turn off oven.
3. Place crayon pieces of different colors in the sections of the muffin tin.
4. Place muffin tin in oven and let the crayons melt.
5. Once melted, crayon wafers will cool and harden and pop out of the muffin tin.
6. Let the children draw on paper using the scribble wafers.



Sticky Finger Paint

Materials:

- 1 Tablespoon light corn syrup
- 2-3 drops food coloring

Directions:

1. Pour corn syrup onto wax-coated paper plate or plastic paint tray.
2. Squirt food coloring into the pool of corn syrup.
3. Mix with fingers and paint.

Cornstarch Fingerpaint

Materials:

- 5 teaspoons cornstarch
- 4 cups cold water
- 2-3 drops food coloring
- Pan
- Stove

Directions:

1. Mix cornstarch with a small amount of water in a pan.
2. Gradually add all the water to the mixture.
3. Cook over low to medium heat until paint is clear and thick like pudding.
4. Add food coloring.
5. Let cool.



Cooked Playdough



Materials:

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup water
- 1 Tablespoon cooking oil
- 1 Tablespoon alum (found in spice aisle of grocery store)
- ½ cup salt
- 2 Tablespoons vanilla
- Food coloring

Directions:

1. Mix all dry ingredients together in a cooking pan.
2. Add oil and water to the dry ingredients.
3. Cook over medium heat on the stove, stirring constantly until the mixture becomes the consistency of mashed potatoes.
4. Remove from heat.
5. Add vanilla and food coloring.
6. Stir well.
7. Divide into balls and work in the color by kneading.
8. When not in use, keep playdough in a sealed zip-lock bag; it does not need to be refrigerated.

Playdough

(not cooked)

Mix together in a bowl:

2 cups all-purpose flour

1 cup salt

4 teaspoons cream of tartar



Mix together and then add to the flour mixture:

2 Tablespoons vegetable oil

1 cup boiling water with LOTS of food coloring in it



Mix and knead until smooth.

Let the children use as soon as the playdough is cool enough to handle.

Store in an airtight container when not being used.

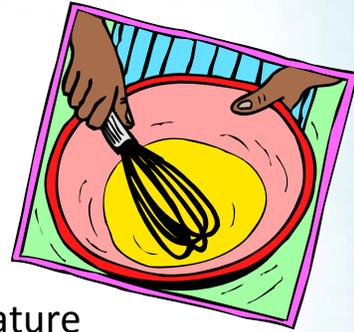


Note: It is also fun to add extracts such as vanilla, lemon, orange, or peppermint so that the playdough smells really good.

Other Dough Recipes

Cocoa Dough

- 3 cups Powdered Sugar
- 6 Tablespoons Baking Cocoa
- $\frac{3}{4}$ Cup Powdered Milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Cup Butter, softened to room temperature
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Cup Light Corn Syrup
- 1 Teaspoon Vanilla



1. Mix all ingredients together and stir until well mixed.
2. This is an edible dough. Provide a portion of dough to each child (this is not to be shared among children).
3. Discard dough after use.

Scented Dough

- 3 Cups Flour
- 1 Cup Vegetable Oil
- 2-3 Drops Scent – liquid or powder (vanilla, peppermint, lemon, orange, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, etc.)
- 2-3 Drops Food Coloring
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Cup Water, determine amount as needed



1. Combine all ingredients, except water.
2. Gradually add water until dough is easily manipulated.
3. Stir until well mixed. Knead, if desired, to finish mixing all ingredients.
4. This is a soft, pasty dough that smells good.



GAK - Elmer's Glue Borax Recipe

Elmer's Glue and Borax combine to make GAK or is it Flubber?

<http://www.stevespanglerscience.com/experiment/00000039>

Materials

Elmer's Glue® (8 oz bottle of Elmer's Glue-All)

Borax (a powdered soap found in the grocery store)

Large mixing bowl

Plastic cup (8 oz size works well)

Spoon

Measuring cup

Food coloring (the spice of life)

Water

Paper towel (hey, you've got to clean up!)

Zipper-lock bag (don't you want to keep it when you're done?)

Water



Here's the easiest way to make a big batch of Elmer's Slime. The measurements do not have to be exact but it's a good idea to start with the proportions below for the first batch. Just vary the quantities of each ingredient to get a new and interesting batch of goo.

1. This recipe is based on using a brand new 8 ounce bottle of Elmer's Glue. Empty the entire bottle of glue into a mixing bowl. Fill the empty bottle with warm water and shake (okay, put the lid on first and then shake). Pour the glue-water mixture into the mixing bowl and use the spoon to mix well.
2. Go ahead... add a drop or two of food coloring.
3. Measure 1/2 cup of warm water into the plastic cup and add a teaspoon of Borax powder to the water. Stir the solution – don't worry if all of the powder dissolves. This Borax solution is the secret linking agent that causes the Elmer's Glue molecules to turn into slime.
4. While stirring the glue in the mixing bowl, slowly add a little of the Borax solution. Immediately you'll feel the long strands of molecules starting to connect. It's time to abandon the spoon and use your hands to do the serious mixing. Keep adding the Borax solution to the glue mixture (don't stop mixing) until you get a perfect batch of Elmer's slime. You might like your slime more stringy while others like firm slime. Hey, you're the head slime mixologist – do it your way!
5. When you're finished playing with your Elmer's slime, seal it up in a zipper-lock bag for safe keeping.

www.stevespanglerscience.com