

# Creative art activities

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A child's vision is global – they take in the entire whole, exploring it fully through all the senses and defining it through creative impulses. This creative exploration and development is absolutely integral to the understanding young children have of their world and how they relate to it; this influences their sense of self and ultimate place in the world.

Making and learning in the arts is a unique form of experience, which cannot be initiated in any other way. Every child has the potential to be creative, original, spontaneous and innovative – every child is an explorer and only needs a stimulating environment that allows them to freely express feelings, experiences and an understanding of life. Children's creativity needs to be nourished and developed from a young age so that it can continue to grow throughout their lives.

Making images is not only non-verbal, it is pre-verbal.

## Drawing and storytelling

### What is drawing?

Drawing is the act of making marks on a surface using line, tone and texture. Children draw to express their feelings, to tell stories and to communicate their ideas to others. They may invent symbols that they know only the meaning of to represent their reality. Children should always be invited to talk about their artwork and not discouraged or judged by adult standards.

### About storytelling

Storytelling is as old as humankind. From the very earliest times it has been the way to entertain, to educate and to pass on history, traditions, important events and legends from one generation to the next. Stories allow people to relax and, just for a moment, to step into another world to become part of another place, time or event. This is where our imagination is stimulated and becomes active. There are many different ways of using stories to stimulate children's ideas and creative thought.

### What you need

- A suitable story that children can relate to their experiences.
- Real objects or pictures to introduce or to use during the story.
- Drawing materials (such as paper, paintbrushes, wax crayons or oil pastels, food colouring).

### Introduction before telling the story

This can be done by doing one or more of the following activities related to the story such as using rhymes or songs that connect to the theme of the story; clapping or dodging games; action songs. Use pictures, real objects or have a theme table to introduce new or unusual items that will be mentioned in the story.

### Tell the story

Some stories are best told together with the children or with the children taking an active part.

### At the end of the story

Allow time for the children to reflect on what they have heard and learnt. Prompt them to share ideas by using open-ended questions that require them to give full sentence replies and to think about solutions to problems. Avoid getting children to repeat the whole story as this can get boring for the other children. Encourage children to share their feelings about the story they have heard.



### Drawing

Have drawing materials set out for the children and invite them to freely draw any picture about the story. Always encourage children to draw freely without self-consciousness, to experiment and explore.

## Printing

### What is printing?

Printing is to transfer a design, pattern or image from one surface to another surface by a range of techniques. This means that some parts of the surface are covered with ink or paint or they may be textured, and other parts are left blank. Children enjoy the magic of the printing process and different cultures express the patterns, designs and symbols that have meaning in their lives.

Before printing, talk about colours and shapes with the children. Allow them to play around with different ways of applying paint to different objects to get exciting prints.

### How to make a print pad

Place a thin piece of sponge, cotton wool or a pad of pre-washed cotton fabric onto a small dish. Mix powder paint with a little water until creamy. Pour several spoonfuls of paint onto the sponge. This helps the object to collect a minimum of paint and gives a clear print.

Place a pad of newspaper under the paper to be printed. This gives a better impression.



### Printing with found objects

Find objects to relief print (try cotton reels, corks, tyre pieces, old shoe soles, rubber, buttons, bottle tops, wood, cardboard shapes, lids, crumpled plastic bag with elastic band to hold it, wheels of broken toys). Show children how to use the print pad by pressing an object onto the print pad and then onto the paper or fabric and repeat without necessarily repressing onto the print pad.

### Printing with sponges

You will need sponges of different shapes and sizes or scrunched up and secured with a clothes peg. Dip these onto the paint pad and print on paper.

### Chalk and dry paint prints

Cut or tear shapes out of thick paper or card. Colour around the edge of the shape with dry coloured chalk. Place on the paper. Hold the shape and gently rub from the shape onto the paper, pulling the colour from the shape onto the paper all around the edge. Carefully lift shape and repeat. The same effect can be achieved by using a finger dipped into dry paint powder and rubbed around the edge of the shape. The finished design can be prevented from smudging by spraying with hair spray.

## Making masks

Masks have been traditionally used in many societies. For centuries, people in Africa have worn masks in rituals and ceremonies to act out myths, to teach moral lessons, to solve problems in the community and to entertain. The masks are usually worn with full costume in dances or plays, accompanied by music and song. They often have distorted or emphasised features to express strong feelings. Masks can tell us a great deal about the people who use them and their society.

### What you need

- Bases for masks (cardboard boxes, paper bags).
- Strong glue.
- Scissors or cutting knives.
- Wire.
- Masking tape.
- Stapler.
- String.
- Pliers
- Wire cutters.
- Powder paint in a range of colours.
- Waste materials (such as wool, raffia, fabric pieces, small cardboard boxes of all shapes, corks, buttons, polystyrene containers, foam pieces, feathers, leather bits, pipe-cleaners, sticks, shiny paper, string grocery bags, pie-plates, tin foil, cotton waste, sponge, toilet rolls, paper towel rolls, old stockings, bottle tops).



Before making masks, play some games to stimulate the children's imaginations and to create awareness of facial details. Show children some examples of masks. If possible, take them to a museum or gallery to see real masks. You could also find photographs of masks in a book on African art. Talk about masks. Why were they made? How were they used? Keep your explanation short and simple.

## Finger painting

### What is finger paint?

Finger paint is a kind of paint intended to be applied with the fingers. Finger painting has therapeutic benefits and is a fun activity for both adults and children.

### What you need

- 1 cup corn flour (maizena).
- Full kettle of boiling water.
- Food colour or powder paint.

### How to make finger paint

Mix cornflour with cold water to form a runny paste (like making custard). Add a few drops of food colour or powder paint into the paste. Pour in boiling water while stirring until the cornflour “cooks” and becomes thick. If the cornflour doesn’t thicken you can place it in the microwave for a minute or two, or you can cook it in a saucepan. When cool, spoon the finger paint directly onto a table top or a plastic sheet on a table or on the floor.

### Activities

The children use both hands to spread the finger paint and make patterns. Lay large sheets of paper over the finger-painted patterns. Pat lightly and then lift the paper carefully. You will see the printed patterns on the paper.

When most of the finger paint has been taken off, children can make new patterns in the paint that is left and then print again.



