

Homemade, taste safe paints

If you are at home looking for ideas but don't have art supplies, try making these homemade paints. You might already have some of the ingredients in your kitchen so they are handy at the moment, but they are great at any time with little ones because they are safe to taste so you don't need to worry about paint going in their mouth.

Flour paint

This paint has a nice thick texture so it's perfect for finger painting with little ones or using with stampers.

You need:

- 1 cup of flour or cornflour or a mixture (we used half and half, the more cornflour the more jelly like the paints are)
 - 3 cups of water
 - Food colouring (this can be whatever you have, we used a mixture of liquid colours and pastes)
 - Teaspoon of salt (this is meant to help the water absorb but it works fine without if you don't want to risk small babies eating the salt)
- Mix the cup of flour with two cups of the water in a pan and then slowly heat it on the hob stirring the whole time. It starts very runny and milky, then it will go a bit lumpy so don't panic, it will gradually come together and start to be thick, smooth and a bit gelatinous. Take it off the heat and stir in the third cup of cold water, more if you want runnier paint. Thick paint is better for babies as they have more control over it.
 - Divide it between bowls, jars or paint pots then stir a drop of food colouring into each. This part is likely to stain so be careful with wee ones. Once the paint is mixed it did not stain our hands, but be careful on clothes.



- For babies, put a few blobs of colour onto paper and let them explore it on the floor, either lying on tummies or sitting up. For older ones, they can try using stamps or brushes or finger painting. You could take this paint to the bath tub and use it for decorating the side of the bath – it washes off really easily.
- These paints keep for several days in the fridge, longer if you add the salt.

Yogurt or pudding paint

If you want it to be even easier with little ones and don't mind it being temporary, try mixing a little food colouring into a babies usual yogurt, pudding or baby rice. You can then let them use this to explore and decorate onto paper, or onto a surface like a high chair tray table or a baking tray, or the bath.

Fruit and veg paints

These paints use the colours of fruit and vegetables to create thin paints that can be used like ink or watercolours.

You need:

- Fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables with strong colours. We used strawberries and redcurrants, blueberries and spinach. You can also try carrots for orange, blackcurrants for purple or a little turmeric in water for yellow.
- If the fruits and veggies are fresh cook them down in a little water to release the juices. If they are frozen just pour a little boiling water over them in a bowl to defrost them. Once cooked or defrosted mash them down using a fork. Toddlers and pre-schoolers might like to help with this step. You could do this step in a blender or a nutri-bullet but a fork is fine.
- Push them through a sieve into a paint pot or jam jar to get the paint.



- Just make a little handful of fruit at a time so you don't waste any - it keeps for a few days in the fridge.
- And a warning – if you have ever had a baby dribble blueberries down their clothes you will know that natural paint colours can stain clothing so wear old clothes or strip down to a nappy and cover your floor or table with newspaper or a cloth.

They are quite runny so better for toddlers than tiny babies. They have a nice watercolour effect and make pastel shades. Blueberries were our most successful with the darkest colour and it was fun because it changed colour from pinkish to blueish after a minute in the air making it seem like slightly magical paint!