



ART AT THE START

Vicky Armstrong and Josephine Ross

ART
AT
THE
START



Contents

Forward 5

Where to begin 7

Set Up 7

Materials 8

Grown-Ups role 9

Making a Mark 11

Making a Print 35

Making in 3-d 47

Displaying and Celebrating 57

Keep Creating 59

Recipes 63

About the Project 67



"I had expected that we would both have lots of fun, but what I didn't fully expect was how much closer we felt afterwards. My baby really enjoyed the freedom of the session and I found it so relaxing and joyful to create things together."

Forward - Why art matters!

Art making together can bring so much joy to very young children and their grown-ups. And while you make art together, you and your baby are also sharing something important.

Making art together builds wonderful moments of connection between babies and their grown-ups - these moments are the key building blocks of strong relationships and self-esteem. By responding positively, your baby learns that the 'mark' they make on the world will be positively received.

Playing with art materials also gives young children new and stimulating sensory experiences. By helping your baby enjoy these experiences, you are teaching them not to be afraid to explore the world.

Making art together will also help develop your child's cognitive and motor skills.

Babies enjoy scribbling and making mess because they like to see their impact on the world. However, art is also the first method of communication and representation that humans engage in - think prehistoric cave paintings! Those scribbles eventually become drawings which can be labelled ("it's the sun!"), and then written words.

To support families in giving their baby the best start possible, and to fill those afternoons whilst you and your baby get to know one another, we want to encourage you to try some 'art at the start'. This book will help you get started playing with art together, and give some information about why these activities are beneficial for you and your baby. A wonderful group of families worked with us in Dundee Contemporary Arts to design these activities and you can see them trying them out throughout this book.

We hope you will enjoy trying these art ideas together. Nothing needs to be perfect. It is just about letting your wee one be creative, explore the different materials and enjoy their time with you. We like to think about giving wee ones an 'invitation' to make art and then following their lead to see what they create.

Art making is for everyone! You too used to be a scribbler, and you already have the skills to make art with your baby! You can use really simple materials, make your own or raid the recycling, it doesn't need to be complicated. If the art turns out nothing like ours, don't worry about it! These are just prompts to get you started - your goal is to have fun, and enjoy making your mark together!

Vicky and Josephine

“It’s definitely changed me and made me realise that I can do more with even at young baby. And actually I enjoy it a bit more than I thought as well...it’s been really valuable for me. And I think my baby as well. I think it’s really nice that she will now grow up having done that sort of thing and hopefully we can keep doing it together”



Where to begin

There are lots of ideas in this book for setting up invitations for your wee ones to make art with you. Pick and choose what you want to try, adapt them to suit your family, or just flick through the pictures for inspiration. We will go over some basic things here to get you started with art and then explore the activity ideas. We’ve separated the ideas into three sections, based on the kind of art making you are doing, but you can do them in any order. Where activities have multiple steps, we have given a simple picture guide to get you going quickly, as well as more detail if you want it. There are extra info boxes as we go along to tell you more about what is happening when you make art together.

Set Up

Get everything out that you might want before you begin – baby wipes, old towel, art materials, extra paper. Cover the surface you are using with a plastic mat, oil cloth, or newspaper.

Use the floor or table, wherever you will be most comfy together. We like to work on the floor, all of us at baby level, so they can use hands and feet, but it can also work well to sit at a table with a baby on your lap, or with them in a high chair. Painting out in the garden is perfect in the summer and you won’t have to worry about mess.

Remember to put wee ones in old clothes or just a nappy (babies are much easier to wash than their clothes!). Put something old on yourself so you can still cuddle a painty baby.



Materials

Materials can be very simple. A few colours of paint are plenty to have a lot of fun. Think about large sizes for the solid materials, that can be held easily and won't fit in their mouth. We like **big crayon eggs** and **giant chinks** for this. You also want materials which don't need a lot of pressure to make a mark or wee ones will get frustrated. So avoid pencils or small crayons.

Paint is best for easy mark making and versatility. Go for thick water-based paint, usually called 'ready mix', 'poster paint' or gouache. Hands are all you need for painting. If you want to try **brushes**, make sure they are chunky to be easy to hold and won't fall apart. We pop our brushes in bottle steriliser between sessions or you can run them through a dishwasher, as they often get sucked on. Other fun ways to spread paint are **rollers** or sponges.

Plastic plates or cupcake tins make great paint trays.

Tip: As lots of wee ones are going to put everything in their mouth, make sure materials are baby safe by choosing non-toxic products. If you are unsure about what you are using, you can always email the company to ask. Lots of paint manufacturers say 3+ on their paint due to the small parts in the lid, but if you check with them, the paint is **non-toxic** and safe to go in their mouth, so keep the bottle up high and put paint out in trays or on plates for them. We use companies like Baker Ross, Hope Education and Specialist Crafts and these all allow online ordering.

You can also make your own materials from food stuffs. We have given you some recipe suggestions for home-made paints and clays at the end of this book.

Clay can be shop bought air dry clay, play dough or home-made. It's nice for adding construction to their art making and can also be good for mark making as it is very easy for them to create a mark with little pressure,

Start keeping a basket of recycled bits and bobs that they can dip into. **Cereal boxes, corks, bubble wrap, fabric, tinfoil** etc.

Paper which is thick enough not to fall apart when wet, and absorbent enough to take paint easily is best – like paper called **cartridge** or **sugar paper** rather than thin photocopier paper. You can add in some recycled drawing surfaces. Try opening out **cardboard boxes** or using newspaper or old **book pages** for a fun effect.

All art materials need supervision - never leave young children alone with art materials - our activities are for doing TOGETHER.



The grown-ups role

Think about art making with wee ones as an exploration. **It is all about the process.** Obviously, we know that you will sometimes want to get a few nice handprints for presents, but don't get caught up on the final product and forget to focus on your wee one's experience. You can find a good compromise by making a couple of nice prints to set aside neatly at the beginning, then letting them loose. Lots of art sessions might end with all the colours being mixed together into a delightful sludge colour – and that's fine! It was about the process to get there not the final product.

So what is your role as the grown up in this art making?

You are there as a fellow explorer, an observer, an encourager, a facilitator, and someone to be generally delighted by everything they show you.

This is definitely an activity where you are right with them in the action. You want to set up an exciting looking invitation of materials for them to try, and then allow them to take that invitation in their own direction. You **follow their lead.** Maybe just occasionally steering them away from painting the dog! If they seem unsure where to begin, you can try making some marks yourself to give them ideas of how to use the materials. **Wonder** about what they are doing, talk about their choices and ask questions – even if they are too young to answer. **Be playful** and focused on the experience of making together without worrying about how it will turn out. It can be nice to take some photos but not at the expense of being there in the moment.

Tip: Sometimes if a painting is looking fantastic and you know it's about to be mixed up, a way to capture it while staying more in the moment than fetching a phone, can be to lay another sheet of paper on top to make a print of how it looked at that stage. Then wee ones can keep up their mixing to see what will happen next.

Psychological needs

The ideas in this book are designed to help you to support your baby to enjoy relationships (attachment security), to become aware that their actions have consequences (agency), to feel in control of their environment (self-efficacy) and to feel confident and positive about themselves (self-esteem). These are big words for little babies, and as you work through our activities, you will see other boxes explaining terms like these in more detail, and describing how the activities in this book address these important building blocks of psychological wellbeing.



“She just liked painting and the chance to get her hands in and she liked the feeling of it. And I notice by the end more confident to put it onto the paper and be moving it about with her hands. I think she just really like that feeling”

Making a mark!

Get started with painting

You need

- ▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼
- Paint (shop bought or homemade)
- A few sheets of paper
- Optional brushes and paint tray (you can use a baking tray too)
- A covered floor or table
- Messy clothes or a bare baby



Little ones will enjoy exploring the texture of the paint and seeing what they can do with it. If they have never felt paint before they might be surprised and take a little while to warm up to it so allow them to explore it in their own time.

The easiest way to get started painting depends a bit on age. For small babies try letting them lie on their tummy and put a sheet of paper where you have already put out a few blobs of paint in front of them. This will let them reach out and feel the paint and then start to move it about on the paper. You often end up with rainbow shaped paintings as they sweep the paint with their arms.

Older babies might like to paint this way too, or they might like to sit between your legs so you are propping them up to explore with hands and feet. Or they can sit

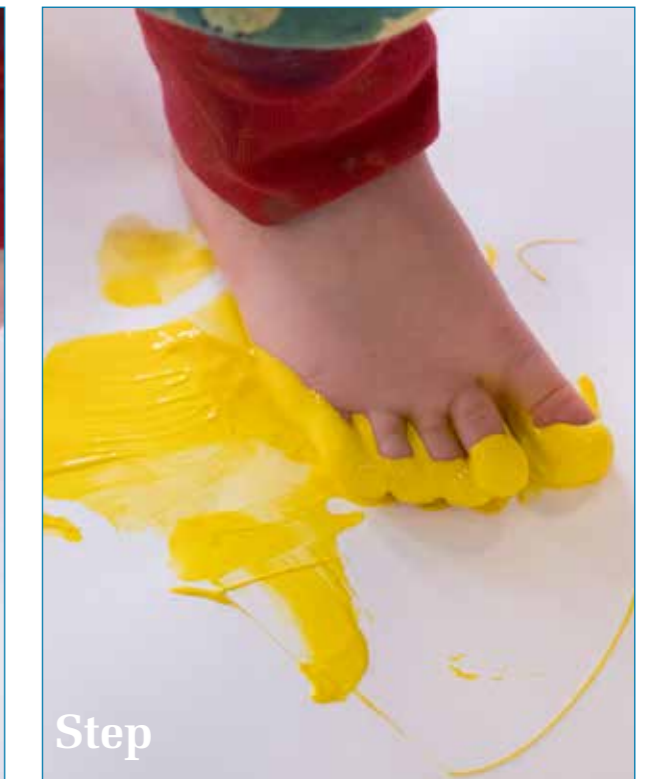
on your lap at a table. You could try helping them to dangle their feet into the paint.

Toddlers might like to see the paint all laid out in the paint tray for them and they can be offered brushes or just their fingers to put it on the paper.

Have a shot yourself to show little ones the idea of making a mark on the paper. Let them explore and see what they come up with. And if they are not a fan today, don't worry, just try again another time. Follow their lead for when they have had enough (tiny ones will not last long) and then move to bath time. If you can pin up their paintings, they might like to look at them and talk about what they made.



“Art helped me communicate and understand my child. I didn’t even know my child loves messy play”



Hand and foot prints

There is no more direct way for wee ones to make their mark than with handprints or footprints. It's nice doing prints like this together as the brushing on of the paint is a nice sensory experience for little ones, as well as seeing the impact of the mark they can make when they stamp it down.

You need

- ▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼
- Paint
- Tray or plate
- Paper

▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲

If you spread some paint over the large tray or a plate, that will let little ones put their hands or feet right in. Or you can paint onto their hands or feet with a brush then let them print it onto the paper.

It can also be really nice to let them have a shot of painting your hands.

You can find lots of ideas online for pictures you can make from baby handprints. Just don't forget that the main point is for them to enjoy making their mark.

Attachment security

Your baby feels sad when they are hungry, sore or tired, and until they are old enough to feed or soothe themselves, they need you to help them. When your baby cries, and you respond, they learn that you can be relied upon to help them feel better. It's okay to let your baby be 'in control' whilst they are very young and vulnerable. This helps your baby to learn that you will keep them safe, and that they are valued. Feeling safe when relying on other people, and feeling 'worthy' of love, is called 'attachment security'. Building attachment security is very important, but

it's also very natural. You make your baby feel secure every time you respond to their emotional or physical needs. Your baby needs you, and if you miss an opportunity to help your baby, the next opportunity will be along soon! We are biologically and psychologically 'programmed' to connect to other people.

Making art together offers you lots of opportunities to respond to your baby as they react to the new sensations of the materials. It's a pleasant environment to help build their attachment security.

Roll



Press



Dry



Variation

Try making handprints using clay. This will be a new sensation for little ones and will also give you a lovely keep sake. You can use shop bought clay or try our recipe at the back for home-made salt dough clay.

Knead a chunk of clay in your hands to get it warm and soft first. Then shape it roughly into a round or oval shape that will fit your baby's hand or foot. Now gently press their hand or foot into the clay to make an impression. You can also write in a name and date. Leave this somewhere warm like a window ledge to dry for about a week or bake if you're using salt dough.

Once dry you could paint the prints together.

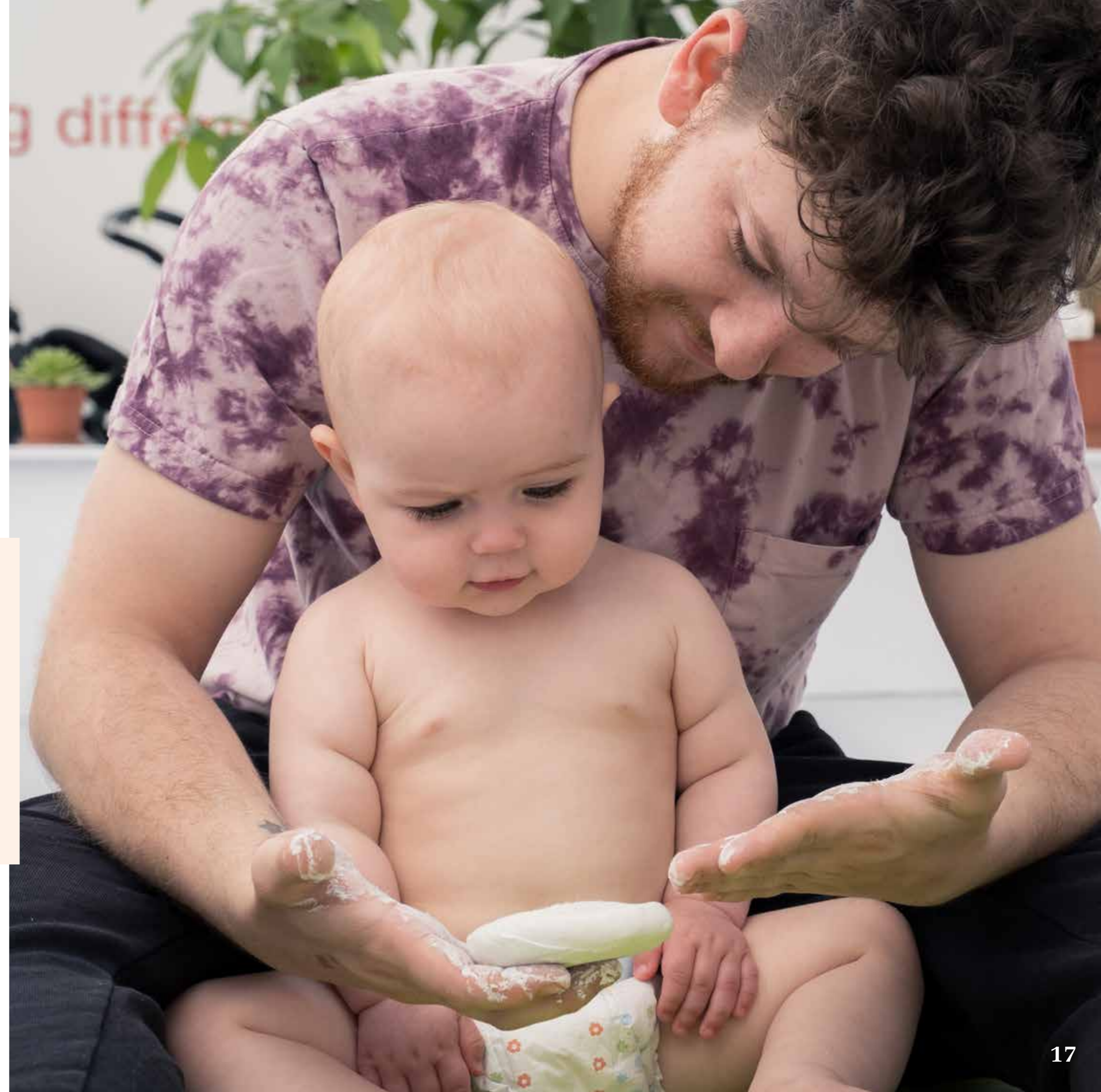
Agency

Right from birth, babies take notice of the impact they have on the world around them, this is called 'agency'. Babies have lots to learn socially (Who will keep me safe?) and physically (How can I move around?), and being able to track the consequences of their actions is really important for this learning. Babies learn that they are effective social 'agents' when you respond appropriately to their social overtures, returning smiles, helping them when they cry. Babies also learn that their agency is effective when their actions have other physical consequences, for example, when shaking the rattle makes a noise.

Babies LOVE to feel in control of their environment. This enjoyment of agency has evolved to help babies learn about the world around them.

Helping your baby make their mark

Babies can make their mark on the world from birth, and art making is the ideal way for you to help your baby explore the consequences of their actions. When your baby smooches paint across a page, or leaves a hand print in clay, they are literally making their mark on the world. Babies are biologically primed to attend to and enjoy this agency, because it helps them to learn about the world and their place in it.



Pour



Seal



Squeeze



Mixing colours

With just a few basic colours you have everything you need to make a whole rainbow and wee ones will enjoy the mixing process.

You need

- ▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼
- Some basic paint colours (red, yellow and blue)
- Tray, pots or jars to mix in
- Paper
- Brushes or spoons
- Option of tubs, droppers and squirters



Tip: Blue and red will make purple and it will look brighter if you add a little white
 Blue and Yellow will make green
 Red and white will make pink
 Yellow and red will make orange

Toddlers will enjoy helping you stir the colours together with a brush or spoon. Egg cartons and muffin trays are great for storing their colour mixes. Maybe you can invent your own colour names together for them?

They might also enjoy a whole session of colour experiments. You can water the paint down in plastic tubs and let them mix colours up using spoons, droppers or the little syringes that come with baby medicines. It doesn't matter if the paint never even makes it to the paper.

For tiny ones you can help them mix the colours about on the paper. You may notice that if they have lots of different colours, or contrasting colours like red and green, they can end up looking a bit sludgy as they are mixed up on the page. If you want to keep colours bright, try starting with only couple of colours.

Variation

- If you want to let them experiment with mixing with less mess, try a **sensory bag** version. Put a couple of colours into a plastic ziplock bag, squeeze out the extra air and seal it up. (if they are a bit rough with it you can add tape over the seal). As they squeeze the bag about, the two colours will mix to form a third. If you put the bag on a flat surface like a high-chair tray, they can also make marks through the paint by drawing with a finger. Try adding shaving foam with the paint for a different texture.



Spray

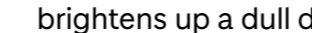


Stained glass windows

This invitation allows little ones to explore colour and light in a different way. Great for a day where you want to let them be creative without the clean-up.

You need

- ▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼
- Some thin papers -tissue paper shapes are great but also kitchen towels, baking parchment, tinfoil, packing from gifts etc.
- Water in a spray bottle or in a pot with a brush
- Ideally a sunny window, but it also brightens up a dull day!



Stick



Check windows are securely fastened before beginning.

Lay out a range of shapes and colours of papers for them to choose from.

Help them wet your window either by brushing on water or spraying with a bottle. This is often their favourite bit! Encourage them to choose different papers and show them how to press the shapes gently onto the window surface where the water will help them to stick.

They can keep going till they build up a pattern that they like. It's also fun to show bigger ones how the different colours can make new colours when they overlap and how some papers are see-through and others like tinfoil are not.

Photo



When they are happy take a photo as these are temporary art works. On a sunny day you will get a stained-glass effect but at night, if your light is on, your neighbours will get to see them. The paper will fall off by itself as it dries.



*“I think I feel more positive.
Doing this I feel that I’m doing
a good thing for my children
and that makes me feel good.”*

Variation

You can adapt this to make a **collage** instead. Do the same thing of cutting out some shapes from different papers or using tissue paper circles. Now let babies feel the different shapes and you can talk about the colours even if they are too small to understand. Cover a sheet of paper in glue (do this for them with small babies) and help them to put the bits that they like down on the paper. Even if they just like scrumpling the paper up, they will be enjoying the different textures and colours available.

Another collage variation is to use **sticky backed paper or vinyl**. Cut it into interesting shapes and this can be stuck onto paper or straight onto a wall to create interesting patterns.

Meeting your baby’s needs

Your baby needs you, and sometimes it is hard to be needed. Sometimes we are just as hungry, sore and tired as our baby, and we might feel we are not doing as well as we might in meeting our baby’s needs. Importantly, we don’t just build attachment security (see page 15) when we respond to our babies cries to be fed or soothed, but also in quiet times. Babies need stimulation, and returning a smile or look, talking to your baby, cuddling or playing with them, offering them a playful environment, are all just as important to your baby as trying to meet their ‘noisy’ needs! Babies are resilient and don’t need for you to get it right all of the time. When you feel tired, or uninspired, we hope that the activities in this book will help you to create a positive environment for you and your child.



Stick



Paint



Peel



Revealing the paper

You need

- Paint
- Paper
- Scrap paper and glue stick OR masking tape

It can be fun to try an activity where you take away paint to leave clear spaces. To do this you can mask off some of the paper before we ones start painting and then remove it to leave a clear space. An easy way to do this is by using masking tape. You might like to make your child's initial in tape or let them do their own design. Once they paint over this, let it dry and then peel off the tape to reveal the design.

Variation:

An alternative is to cut out shapes to use as **stencils**, from scrap paper and lightly stick them down using a small dot of glue stick. Wee ones can paint over these stencils, then peel away to reveal the pattern.



Stick Shapes

Paint



Self-efficacy and self-esteem

When your baby feels in control of their environment, they experience their 'agency' positively. This positive feeling helps them to build confidence in themselves. The feeling that you are effective in controlling your environment is known as 'self-efficacy' and is very important for human wellbeing.

Based on their self-efficacy and their attachment security (in your own relationship and beyond), your baby will eventually come to form an overall impression of themselves and their worth, known as self-esteem. Positive self-esteem is a very important protective factor for our mental health. By loving your baby, and supporting them in being 'effective', you are helping them to build a positive impression of themselves and their own abilities.

When you support your baby in creating art, and praise their creativity, you are sending them the message that the mark they are making on the world is valuable.

Pinch



Different mark making tools

This invitation is about trying out different tools for getting paint onto the paper instead of brushes. It's fun to add variety to the mark making to keep it new and interesting for wee ones. It's also a fun treasure hunt and sensory exploration as you look for textures.

You need



Paint
Tray or plate
Paper
Materials from round the house like cotton wool balls, pegs, dish cloths, toothbrushes, spatulas, feathers, sticks, leaves, etc



Paint



Look for ideas together around the house and garden that might make interesting marks.

Some of your found tools you can use by dipping straight into the paint and then using to make marks onto the paper. For example, a toothbrush can splatter, or a fork might make interesting stripes.

Or you can make a 'brush' by pinching some of your finds into the end of a peg. Favourites of ours for making brushes are feathers, a bit of old dish cloth cut into strips, a cotton ball, a bunch of leaves, some shredded bubble wrap and bit of dish sponge folded a couple of times. Once you have a selection, let your wee one touch them, talk about how they feel and what they might look like on the paper. And then have fun testing them!

Experiment



For small babies make sure nothing is small enough that they could swallow it.

Variation

If you don't have pegs, you can also tape materials to the end of sticks to make brushes. You could try taping to really long sticks for older toddlers for a fun experiment that lets them use their whole body for painting.



Developing baby's brain

When children are little, offering varied sensory experiences helps to connect neural networks in the brain. It also supports their fine motor development, like their ability to hold and move a crayon. Some activities use their whole body and these physical activities help develop gross motor skills. Babies are kinaesthetic learners - this means that their whole body and their physical process is part of their learning experience. These developments, alongside your social support, will help to lay the foundation for future learning.





Making art together

Making art with your baby is the perfect way to build a strong connection with them because it gives you a basis to connect to them as an 'agent'. When you focus on your child, and mirror their social overtures (smiles, gurgles) your child feels connected to you. When your child is young, you can talk to them about what they are creating and support them physically to make their mark. As your child gets older, they will also be able to 'share attention' with you, meaning that you can switch focus between the art and each other, helping to create the feeling of having a shared goal, and increasing psychological closeness as you work together. You can also share attention with your child when you play with toys, but art making is special because you create a record of your shared experience and connection as you go.



Adding different materials

So far we have stuck to paints and clay as these are easy materials for babies and toddlers to make marks with so they don't become frustrated. If they are able to sit up and grip, then you might want to add in some other materials for them to explore. Stick to ones which are soft and make marks easily, like giant chalks or wax crayons. We like big egg shapes for easy holding.

You can give wee ones paper and chalk and let them experiment. Chalks are best with rough paper so lots of colour comes off easily and chose a contrasting colour so it shows up strongly.

The development of mark making

Psychologists used to think that babies' mark making was accidental until they started trying to make shapes that represented real life things. But now we think about the ways in which their mark making is exploring their own movements and their effect on the world in a deliberate way. Three main actions you may see are babies making sweeping motions with their whole arms, a swipe down that results in dots or splatters, and a push pull action. All of these are also important in the other physical skills they are learning and how they understand the world.

Wax resist with crayons and paints

In this activity we are combining crayons with paints in a classic you will probably remember from when you were small. The wax resist adds a new dimension to painting and the sloppier paint gives a different sensation.

You need



- Big crayons
- Paper
- Paints in a mixing tray or jars



Crayon Scribble



Show little ones how the crayons can make a mark on the paper and then let them try creating marks. Toddlers who know what they are doing with crayons can go wild making a design on the paper.

Mix water into your paint colours. Half water, half paint will give you runny watercolour paint. Show little ones how to slop this onto their drawing and move it about. The paint won't stick to the crayon so their drawing will show through.

Tip: Pale colours of crayon look good so they pop out when you add darker paint.

Water down paint



Art is for everyone

Don't forget that art making is also one of our oldest forms of communication! We have found cave drawings from the earliest humans, and all human children are motivated to scribble. From scribbling, they develop to labelling images they make with what they seem to look like, and then they start trying to deliberately represent the world around them. You may have noticed that young children tend to draw people as a head, with arms and legs protruding; these 'tadpole' figures are seen all over the world and are recognised as a universal phenomenon in child development. Art

Paint over



making can become a way to represent the world around us. But it can also help us to represent our inner world and share ideas. When babies scribble they may be exploring their own ability to move their limbs, how that feels, and what they see appear on the paper - and importantly they can share that with you!

We have a basic need to create and accessing that need - even if you are long past your childhood - may help you to release stresses, feel more in control, and more relaxed.



Sticking things on

Add variety and new sensory experiences by having a selection of things for them to stick on to the paint. This is pretty limitless so start gathering up things that might be interesting and when it's time to make art, put out a few in bowls as an invitation for wee ones to try them. Make sure they are safe for your age of child. Here are some to try.

Snipping up paper to make confetti, snow, or ice cream sprinkles!

Magazine cut outs snip out interesting images when you see them.

Pompoms or cotton wool balls are nice to touch or to add to art work.

Feathers can be wings, hair or just decorations, and they are nice to play with first.

Tissue paper can be laid on flat, scrunpled, or twisted into flowers.

Wool snipped into short lengths for safety adds interesting texture or hair.

Leaves and flowers make sure they are safe for babies in case they put them in their mouth.

Doilies can just be stuck on or can be painted through to get a pattern.

Tinfoil adds some shiny interest or can be crinkled for texture.

Sand in a shaker, either coloured art sand or just play pit sand, can add fun with the shaking action, and some iridescence instead of glitter. It spread of sand gives an interesting textured surface that can be drawn into with a finger and then tipped back into the pot to shake again.





Shine light

Play with light and shadows

We know that not every day will be one where you want to be messy painting. This is a way to play that is visually interesting without mess. It is also a nice direct way for little ones to see how their actions have immediate effects; as they move about, their shadows move. This game is also nice for relationships as you can make up stories together and each make shadows to interact. For babies the high contrast of black and white is engaging.

You need

▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼
white fabric, like a sheet or a tablecloth
a spotlight, table lamp or torch
puppets from hands, toys or cut from card



Add toys

Start by shining the light onto the front of the sheet and then you can sit in front and show wee ones how they can use their hands to cast shadows onto the fabric. Play about at trying to make your hands look like animals. The easiest is to use your fingers to make some kind of beak or mouth and then your puppets can talk to each other. Show them how putting their hands nearer or further from the light can change the size of the shadow. Babies especially will be happy to just look at the high contrast visuals they are getting from the shadows whereas toddlers might want to develop more of a story or 'show'.



Create story

Once wee ones understand how it is working you could move the light behind the sheet to make it into more of a puppet theatre if you like. You could take turns showing each other an idea or get siblings involved in putting together a story for you to watch.

You can add to your puppets. What about making some extra features from card to hold in their hands. Or you can add in some of their own toys to hold up and see what they create as a shadow. We are using play mobile figures and trees here. You can use sticky tape to tape some toys to chop sticks so there is a handle to hold and it's easier for them to keep their own shadow out of the way.



Go Big

Playing with scale

You need

▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼
Paint
Large paper - rolls or lots of sheets stuck together
Optional, sponges, rollers, big brushes
▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲

It is fun to keep wee ones engaged in mark making by playing with scale and going huge. We like to stick big rolls of paper to the floor and let the babies crawl or roll around and use the paints. They really enjoy the freedom it gives them and it's fun to see the marks the little ones make and how they differ depending on how mobile they are - the youngest babies who are sitting making rainbows of paint



Go Tiny

around themselves and those who can crawl covering the space.

To try this at home, you can use rolls of old wallpaper or lining paper. Stick them down to the floor with masking tape to stop it from moving about. You can introduce sponges or rollers when they are tired of using their hands and feet, or some really big household brushes. It is fun to do this one with siblings and each have a different colour so you can see how they have moved around each other on the paper.

Tip: This is also a good one to try outside on a nice day.

Another way to play with scale is to see how they respond to very tiny bits of

paper to paint onto - just cut up paper into small squares and see how this might change the way they engage with painting. Do they make smaller marks, or work across several sheets, or use different colours on each bit? These will look nice displayed all together at the end, or even joined into a little book that they are able to flip through.





“She got braver, messier, the more we did it. Like to start with she was barely touching it, you know And then after a couple of times doing it she was just getting really really brave and she was just sitting about in her nappy covered in paint.”

Stick down



Bubble wrap printing

Bubble wrap makes a great surface for printing patterns. It also feels amazing covered in slippery paint so will give a nice sensory dimension to the play.

You need

- ▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼
- A sheet of bubble wrap packaging
- Paints
- Tape
- Paper



Stick the bubble wrap to the table or floor to stop it moving around or being eaten. Help your wee one to spread paint over the bubble wrap, trying to cover the whole surface. They can use hands or a brush. Like with the normal painting, small babies will find it easier if you put a blob of paint straight on for them to spread.

Spread Paint



When they are happy with the colours lay a sheet of paper over the painting and show little ones how to rub their hands gently over the paper to transfer the print and then peel it off and have a look. You should get a few prints before you need to add more paint.

These look great just as dotty paintings or you could cut shapes so the dots can add a scaly pattern, like fish or dinosaurs.

Variation:

You can also think of some other interesting textures to try printing in this way like **corrugated card** or a **bumpy sponge**. Or for a non-paint version how about making a rubbing of interesting textures using crayons or chalk. Look for interesting textures in your home together - duplo bricks, grainy wood, sieves - then lay over a sheet of thin paper and help them rub with a large crayon or chalk.

Press Paper



Helping your baby to experience new things

Art materials and the sensations they bring are likely to be novel to your child. By helping them to feel safe whilst exploring this novelty, you are teaching your child that new things are fun to explore, and that they are effective explorers! This confidence is critical for your child, who has lots of new learning experiences ahead!





Paint

Different ways of relating

Making art together is also a good way for you to explore different ways of relating to your baby. Sometimes, you will want to connect with your baby by creating something together. Other times, you may be content to facilitate your baby in making their mark, supporting them physically to access the materials, and praising or narrating their efforts. As humans, we have lots of different 'channels' of communication available to us, including touch, talking, eye contact and emotion; all of these channels are effective in communicating to others that we are holding them in mind.



Rub

Printing with baking tins

Doing a print from paint on a surface rather than straight on to the paper gives a different effect to the finished painting and you can do several from one surface to get a set. Wee ones seem to like the chance to paint on something normally out of bounds and the smooth surface lets them push about the paint in a different way to when it's on paper.

You need

▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼
 Metal baking trays or cupcake tins
 Paint and Paper
 Brushes or hands for spreading
 ▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲



Lift

Let little ones pour or brush paint onto the underside of a baking tray. For babies you might want to put the drips of paint straight onto the tray yourself and let them feel it and smear it about.

When they are happy with their design, help them to lay on a sheet of paper and gently rub the back before peeling off to reveal the print. You should be able to print several before the paint runs out or they can add some new drips and try again.

Paint



Or with cupcake tins

We particularly like making mini prints from a cupcake tin as they are easy to handle when you're small and look great all together or used in a collage.

Cut paper into small squares. Spread colours over the underside of the cupcake tin and then print each one. This would also be a good chance for toddlers to practice mixing different colours and seeing what happened as each little circle is a different experiment.

Print



Arrange



Snip



Dip



Stamp

Unfold

Try Stamping

Stamping is another printing process – using an object to transfer the paint from one surface to another. You can buy stamps for wee ones to use but here we are going to explore some stamping techniques around the house. These will encourage wee ones to explore different textures and shapes and think creatively.

You need

- Paint
- A tray or plate, large enough to fit your objects
- Paper
- Objects to print



Cardboard tubes

These make fun printing tools for doing daisies (or they could be nice sunshines) and they are easy for little ones to hold on to and experiment with.

Make a stamp shape by cutting slits around the end of a tube and then folding these outwards into a flower shape. You could help toddlers do the cutting themselves or do it in advance for babies.

Now show them how to dip the stamp you've made into paint and make a print onto the paper.

Then just let wee ones experiment and see what they come up with. They could also use an uncut end of a tube to print a circle shape and use this to make a pattern or form the centre of a flower.

Balls

Roll balls through paint and then roll or bounce them onto paper

Circles - Add your cardboard tube to other circle shapes you collect around the house. Try to get lots of different sizes – corks, caps, bowls, tape rolls, cups. Lay them out with trays of paint as an invitation to try different patterns.

Footprints Toy animals make great prints if they are dipped into paint and then stomped about on the paper.

Vegetables Use the funny texture of veggies like broccoli or cut interestingly shaped ones like peppers in half.

Tyre tracks Dip the wheels of cars into paint and let wee ones roll them over the paper to make tyre tracks

Building toys

Try wooden blocks or Duplo bricks dipped in paint to get interesting shapes

Natural Objects

Natural materials like shells or pine cones can make nice textures



Roll



Press



Dry



Stamp into clay

The same toys you used to stamp into paint will work really well to stamp into clay to make a relief pattern. Especially good are blocks, shells and animals.



“I feel better doing it as well. I’m also having more fun. I’m just enjoying it. It’s a nice thing to do together”





Making in 3-D

In this section we are going to look at making 3-dimensional art works using construction processes or by painting onto larger objects. This will allow wee ones to think spatially and to use their whole bodies. For children who feel a bit nervous starting with a big white page they may feel more confident to get creative onto a surface like an old box. They are able to experiment and have fun. And children who don't think they like to draw or paint might like art that includes the element of construction.

Build with boxes You need

- ▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼
- Cardboard boxes from the recycling in different sizes
- Masking tape
- Paint to decorate
- Scissors (keep out of reach)
- Paper to wrap boxes is optional



Start by gathering recycling like boxes, lids, cartons, and other interesting shapes. Paint will stick better if it's raw cardboard. If it's shiny on the outside like a cereal box you could unfold the box and turn it inside out to stick back together so the paint won't flake off.

Tip: To help paint stick, we sometimes cover boxes in white paper or newspaper, or give shiny packaging a coat of white household paint if you have any around which will also give the paint a surface it can stick to.

For babies you might try offering a few different shapes and practice stacking these up and exploring them. When ready to paint you can give them a tray of paint colours and see how they respond to painting on something 3-D.

For toddlers, try presenting a selection of your finds with an open invitation to see what they might make from it. You can follow along with their ideas and support them by helping with tricky bits like cutting or sticky taping parts together if they need you. Make sure you follow their lead though and encourage them to show you how they want it to look. It is lovely for them to see something from their imagination become reality. Once their sculpture is built, they can paint it.

Some ideas if they need inspiration might be to make a juice carton into a little house, a tissue box into a boat with a paper sail, a bigger box into a castle with tubes for turrets, or if you have a big enough box, something to sit inside. Make spaces to sit in or maybe some doors to open. That will give the opportunity for loads of fun interactive play

Helping your baby to have fun

Art materials are novel, and one way humans deal with the unexpected is to laugh! You might find that whether things go very 'wrong' or very right, you and your baby find lots to laugh at whilst making art together! This shared emotional experience builds a strong, positive psychological connection.

If your child seems excited when you take out the art materials, you will know that they have learned that art materials are fun, and that they expect to have fun with you!



Developing communication

Babies' early communication happens using sounds, expressions and gestures. Nice communications develop between babies and their parents with a serve-and-return rhythm. The baby gestures, the parent responds, the baby responds, and back and forth. This happens during art making if they make a mark and then you add a mark - starting a conversation in paint.

One of the key ways in which children learn language is by sharing attention with adults who talk about and label objects and activities for them. Art making is ripe for learning new vocabulary, and gives you and your child something to talk about 'together'. Importantly, because of the new sensations from the materials, you might see babies having lots of strong reactions - positive and negative! When you reflect these back to them you build their emotional vocabulary.



Create a world

Use their 3-d creations as a jumping off point for play by making imaginary landscapes and incorporating their toys. Here we used big paper to create landscapes and used the cardboard houses along with animals. You could also try using their tyre paintings as roads to drive along.

They could add in natural materials like **stones** and **branches** to make a landscape.



Developing Imagination

You can also use art making to stimulate your child's imagination. Pretend play is incredibly fun and has been identified by Psychologists as an important developmental milestone. It helps your child to entertain the idea that their reality is not the only one. This is a very important step in your child's ability to consider that other people may have different thoughts and experiences to them. You spend so much of the first years holding your child in mind, and it is very rewarding for your relationship when they begin to consider you too!



Cut shapes



Paint



Slot



Base



Press



Join

3d slotting sculpture

This is a bit like those children's construction toys that slot together but made big. It's nice because you paint it flat so it's easy with even small babies but can be joined together to make something exciting. And they can play at making different sculptures from the same pieces.

You need

- ▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼
- Card from recycling
- Paint and brushes
- Scissors (keep out of reach)
- ▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲

For babies we recommend preparing this yourself beforehand, but toddlers might like to help you make the shapes as well as paint it. You need to cut out several different shapes from the cardboard. You can draw round plates and bowls to get some different circles as well as cutting

triangles and squares or whatever you fancy. It doesn't matter if the shapes are wonky, so if toddlers want to draw them for you to cut out then that will be fine. You need to cut a slot out of each shape. If the card is thick do two cuts beside each other to make the slot bigger.

Now let wee ones decorate these with the paints, as brightly coloured as possible. If they have the patience you can flip them and do the backs when they are dry but it's not essential. Once the shapes have dried completely, you can show them how to slot the pieces together in whatever way wee ones fancy.



Construct from clay

You need

- ▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼
- Clay, salt dough or play dough
- Lolly sticks, twigs or straws
- ▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲

Our next exploration is using clay for construction by combining it with some sticks like lolly sticks or twigs. Help little ones to create a base and show them how the sticks will hold upright if you put them in the clay. Then they can get started exploring the possibilities. Some may like to make something that looks a bit like a stick hedgehog or Stonehenge.

If you see that toddlers might like to build something higher, show them that clay can be used as a joining material by placing a ball where sticks meet. You can also show how a little bit of clay dipped

in water can be smoothed over to hold pieces together. Sometimes things will fall down but that is OK, most children will enjoy the process of experimenting. You can let them try out different ideas and support them when they need it or have an idea they need help to realise. You can let wee ones decide if they want to keep their creation and let it dry on a window or take it apart and save the clay in something airtight for another day.



Offering praise!

Art making is a process which directly supports your ability to connect with your child, physically, emotionally and through language. As your child makes their mark on the page, you have an opportunity to react positively to their creation, sending the message that they are effective and their impact on the world is valued.



Paint shapes

Make 3-d hanging constructions
Art works which hang can be interesting as they introduce movement. Decorate and then hang these ideas.

You need

- String
- Sticks for a mobile
- Card and Paint to create hanging objects

You can make a simple hanging planet from two plates back to back. Or you could try slotting two circles together to make a sphere.

For a mobile, cut shapes from thin card making 2 of each shape. Help your baby decorate them with paints. Once they are dry glue the matching pieces back to back trapping thread in between. They can also add extra textures like feathers.



Thread

Make a cross from blunted chopsticks or lolly sticks and tie on each shape. Once they are all tied on you can hang it by a central string and adjust the length of each stick until it all balances. Older children can help and learn about balance doing this.

Make sure you hang the mobile where wee ones can see it but cannot reach it to keep them safe.



Hang



Paint



Decorate



Display



Decorate branches

Paint and decorate sticks or branches to add a new texture and challenge for little ones. You could put them up in the house as a decoration.

You need

▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼
Paints - the thicker the better for this. Optional decorations like coloured wool, tissue paper leaves, coloured sand and coloured tape (called washi tape in craft shops).



This idea starts outdoors in the garden or park. Can you find a nice branch together on a walk? Make sure to only take fallen branches and be careful of any sharp ends near wee ones eyes.

Put the branch on top of paper and set out some paints. Let your wee one explore painting onto the branch. You might need to do a little yourself to show them. Encourage them to use bright colours. Then once the branch is dry you can help them to add extra decorations if you like. We like wrapping round some coloured wool or washi tape. You might also glue on some pompoms or try dipping it into glue and then glitter or sand.

Tip: Paints sometimes show up better against the brown branch if you add a little white, or you can peel off the bark.





Displaying and Celebrating

Young children will love to see their own art works up in the house and this can extend their enjoyment as they get to see them over and over. It can also be a memory of a really nice time together. This does not need to be complicated at all. It's fun to be able to swap work around so here are some ideas for changeable displays.

Clip up with pegs like a washing line.

Make a frame as you stick pictures up by using coloured tape.

Use old frames from charity shops with the glass taken out, ready to stick work into.



Use boxes covered in white paper to make mini plinths for 3-D art works.

Punch holes and tie several artworks together into a book to flip through with your baby.

You can also use art works as cards or wrapping paper to gift to family and friends.

Displaying your art work!

We encourage you to display you and your children's art work, so that you might be reminded and reflect on the steps you have made in building your relationship, but also so your child can see that their 'mark' is valued. Although art making is a process, the product can be a concrete reminder that 'today, we did something good'.



“I feel a bit more confident now I've had some ideas. I know that he can do it, so I feel a bit more brave, to like, look up an idea on the Internet. And you see sometimes on Pinterest there's ideas of things you can do with their wee feet and that kind of thing, and so now we've got the paint and I know that we'll manage. It's nice to be able to do those”

Keep creating!

We hope you have enjoyed the time you spent together being creative.

You may have noticed them enjoying the **connected** time playing with you. You may have seen an increase in eye contact together and in joint attention (when you and they are looking at something together and sharing a moment).

You might also have seen them trying new **sensory experiences** which will have helped their brain development.

You may have seen a development in their **motor skills** – babies trying to hold brushes and reach out for materials; toddlers starting to have more control of their mark making.

You may also have seen their emotional reactions to different materials and been able to talk about these which will have

strengthened your relationship. It will also have expanded their **emotional vocabulary.**

You may have seen their **sense of self** develop as they saw the impact they could have on the world as they made marks or caused an effect with the materials.

We hope you also had a lot of **fun!**

What to do next

Now that you've got started making art together, please do keep going!

Visit

Your local art gallery can be used like your library for art – go there for help and ideas about making art with little ones. Most galleries will have a learning team dedicated to helping get families involved and some have special spaces where you can have a go.

At Dundee Contemporary Arts we have a lovely welcoming Create Space to play in and we run family sessions and special activities for very young children. You can find out more on our website:

www.dca.org.uk

Sign up to mailing lists to hear about events taking place. Or just pop in and ask.

Other places to check out in the Dundee area include the V&ADundee:

www.vam.ac.uk/dundee

and the McManus:
www.mcmanus.co.uk.

Look Online

Our website has further recipes and ideas to try:
www.sites.dundee.ac.uk/artatthestart/

Arts charity Starcatchers have 'Wee inspirations' for play with different art forms:
www.starcatchers.org.uk/

Lots of galleries now have online ideas so you can join even if you live far away.
Try the National Galleries in Edinburgh:
www.nationalgalleries.org/visit/families#Families_at_home

Try out the Tate in London for ideas:
www.tate.org.uk/kids

Or the Whitworth in Manchester even do zoom play sessions that you could join in live with your baby:
www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk/learn/earlyyears/earlyyearsatelier/

Find events

Have a look at the Fantastic for Families website which lists hundreds of creative activities for young children in museums and galleries all round the country, online and in person:
www.fantasticforfamilies.com/

Read More

If this has got you interested in thinking more about babies relationships and development you could read more on the Connected Baby website:
<https://connectedbaby.net/>

Research

If you work in the early years, or would like to find out more about the evidence base for the ideas in this book, you can find our public health case study about the different work we do here:
www.rsph.org.uk/our-work/resources/allied-health-professionals-hub/case-studies.html

or our open access article about art making at home here
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2021.01.031>

We link to all our research on our website
<https://sites.dundee.ac.uk/artatthestart/research/>





Recipes

Flour paint

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

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 cold 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 the 2 cups of the water in a pan and slowly heat 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. Make sure you bring it to the boil to kill any germs, then take it off the heat and stir in the 3rd cup of cold water, more if you want runnier paint. Thick paint is better for babies though as they have more control over it.

Divide it between bowls, jars or paint pots then stir in a drop of food colouring into each. This part is likely to stain so be careful with wee ones. Once the paint was mixed it did not seem to stain our hands, although I would be careful on clothes. These keep for several days in the fridge, longer if you added 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 your 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 their high-chair tray table or a baking tray, or even onto the side of 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 use redcurrants or strawberries for red, blueberries for purple, spinach for green, red cabbage for blue, or turmeric cooked 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 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 use a blender, but a fork is fine.

Push them through a sieve into a paint pot or jam jar to get the paint.

Make a little handful of fruit at a time as they won't keep.

They are quite runny for a nice watercolour effect and make pastel shades. Blueberries are our most successful, with the darkest colour. They change colour from pinkish to blueish after a minute in the air making for slightly magical paint!

Stain warning

If you have ever had a baby dribble blueberries down their clothes you will know that natural paint colours can still definitely stain clothing, probably more than commercial paint, so wear old clothes or strip down to a nappy and cover your floor or table with newspaper or a cloth.

Salt dough clay

Can be softer than shop bought and so nicer for wee ones to play with. The recipe is easy and you can get them to help measure and mix if they are big enough.

Flour for all these recipes should be heat treated to kill any bacteria. Spread a thin layer on a baking sheet and heat it in your oven at 300°F for about 10 minutes or until it reaches a temperature of 160°F. You can also place the flour in a microwave safe bowl and microwave it in 30 second increments until the temperature reaches 160°F

You need



1 cup of flour
1/2 cup of salt (the cheap table salt you get in bags)
1/2 cup of warm water added gradually.



Mix then knead to get a nice smooth consistency. Super simple! Mixing is fun for wee ones to help with. If not using it right away rub some oil on the outside to keep it warm and smooth and wrap it up with cling film. You can also double up the recipe if you need more.

The dough will be nice for making models, doing handprints or cutting out with biscuit cutters or play dough tools. If you knead it for a while in your hands first it will feel nice and warm and smooth so most little ones like it.

Once you have your shapes pop them on a baking tray in a warm oven (about 80c) to dry out for several hours, depending on how thick they are, until cooked through (check the back isn't still squishy). You can then paint them and decorate as you chose.

Although this is made from food stuff, don't let them eat it as it is so salty.

Play dough

Can be made easily at home and it has a nice texture. Like with the salt dough this uses kitchen ingredients but still shouldn't



be eaten in large quantities because it's salty. There are lots of recipes online for playdough but this one is useful as it doesn't use the cooker so wee ones could help measure until you add the boiling water.

You need



1 cup flour (heat treated)
2 TBS cream of tartar
1/2 cup salt
3/4 cup boiling water
1 TBS cooking oil
Food colours



Measure out all the ingredients except water and colouring into a heat proof bowl and stir. Pour in the boiling water and stir vigorously. As it comes together into a ball tip it out onto the table, it's ok if it's a

bit lumpy. Once it's cool enough knead it hard until it's smooth. Now separate it into smaller balls and knead a little colour into each one.

Baby safe edible dough

If your baby is eating everything and you'd like a salt free version of dough try this.

You need



1/2 cup uncooked oatmeal (baby porridge)
1/4 cup water
1/4 cup flour (heat treated)



Mix these together till it makes a soft squishable dough. This one won't keep like the baked salt dough but it is great for very young babies to safely have the same sensory experience of squeezing and shaping.



About the Art at the Start project and this book

Our project, Art at the Start, is dedicated to getting really young children making art together with the important grown-ups in their lives. Vicky is an art therapist and Josephine is a psychologist, and we work with Dundee Contemporary Arts to bring art making to 0-3 year olds and to support families to take part. We see art making together creating moments of wonderful connection between parent and child, it helps the social development of babies and toddlers, develops cognitive and physical skills, and most importantly brings so much joy.

During 2020, like the rest of the world, we couldn't work with families face to face. We began sending out home art boxes with art materials and activity ideas. Parents who tried these boxes told us about the changes they saw from using the art materials with their wee ones: They felt good in themselves. They were more

involved in their babies play. They noticed their wee ones were excited when the box came out and were making more eye contact and looking to show them things. As psychologists, this made us really happy, as we know these kinds of behaviours show they are having connected, shared experiences. These are great for wellbeing and help make strong attachment relationships.

Parents also told us that without the box, they wouldn't have tried art making with their children at such a young age and that they hadn't really known what they should use or how to get started. And so this book came out of that... We want to give as many wee ones the chance to get creative and have fun with art as possible so hope this will support parents to give art making a go.



Acknowledgements

This book was co-created with some wonderful families who helped us to test and develop the ideas and who are featured in the illustrations of this book. We would like to say a massive thank you to them all.

Especially our baby testers - **Lucas, Georgie, Roman, Innes, Olivia, Ruairy, Arham, Avia, Ramaisa, Aisha, Fatima, Murray, Caleb, Shamik and Kaylen.**

We benefitted from having some great collaborators on this book - **Sarah Derrick**, Head of Learning at DCA, **Anna Gavine** in the Mother Infant Research Unit and **Gil Martin** in the School of Education and Social Work. **David P Scott** has captured the most beautiful images for us and they really help show the great moments that art creates. And **Martin Dobbin** has helped us bring it all together into a book.

This book has been funded at various stages of development. The **University of Dundee Wellcome Trust Seed Fund** funded the initial Home Art Box project, the **University of Dundee Innovation and Impact Development Fund** helped with sessions, photography and production, the **Scottish Graduate School of Social Sciences Impact Award** and the **University of Dundee Festival of the Future** helped to fund printing and distribution to families.



