

# MESSY

PLAY



**XPLAY**  
SCOTLAND

## Dear Parent and Playworker,

Children love to get muddy, covered in paint and stuff when playing, we call this Messy Play!

Play is essential to children's development. Messy Play can help develop children's senses as they explore the different textures of materials.

Messy Play also helps children develop their imagination as they are allowed to play freely and investigate.

Children can gain independence and develop their problem solving skills through Messy Play as they choose the materials and decide how to best make their creations.

There are many materials which you can use for Messy Play and in this booklet we have included some recipes which you and the children can make together.

Remember to dress for mess .... old t-shirts, aprons and cover floors with newspapers

... Have fun!

Marguerite Hunter Blair  
*Chief Executive, Play Scotland*



# Play Dough

## What you need:

- 2 cups of plain flour
- 2 cups of water
- 1 cup of salt
- 2 tablespoons of cream of tartar
- Food colouring

## What to do:

Mix all ingredients together in a saucepan and bring to boil. Cook for a further two minutes until it forms a solid lump and allow to cool. Then knead the lump onto a floured surface.

Store in an airtight container or cling film. This should last for a few weeks.

Why not try making fairy dough by adding some glitter.



# Papier Mache

## What you need:

- Cold water
- Flour (one part flour to one part water)
- Strips of newspaper, about 1 inch/3 cm wide or bigger if you prefer

## What to do:

Mix the flour in a large bowl (2 cups of each is a good amount to start with) until it makes a smooth paste. Dip in the newspaper strips, one at a time, remove excess paste with your fingers and lay the coated newspaper on the item to be covered. Smooth out the wrinkles and continue to place coated newspaper over the surface until completely covered. When the surface has totally dried, paint your own design using acrylic or poster paint.

## Things you could make:

**Face** – put papier mache over a blown up balloon. Add wool or pom poms/cotton wool balls for hair.

**Animals and characters** – using empty plastic cartons or bottles as your base. To add features such as eyes and legs, attach cut out egg cartons and cardboard tubes to the body using masking tape and pipe cleaners for antennas.

# Cornflour Clay

## What you need:

- 1 cup of cornflour
- 2 cups of salt
- 3 cups of cold water



## What to do:

Put the salt and 2 cups of water in a saucepan and bring to boil. Mix the rest of the cornflour with the remaining water and stir well. Blend the two mixtures and knead into clay. Mould the clay into shapes and once hard, this can be painted.

# Sawdust Clay

## What you need:

- 1 cup of white paste
- 2 cups of sawdust

## What to do:

Mix the ingredients together to form a ball then mould into the shape as desired. Once hardened, this can be painted.



# Sand Sculpture Clay



## What you need:

- 2 cups of fine sand
- 1 cup of cornstarch
- 1 cup of water

## What to do:

Put all the ingredients into a pot and heat on the stove and then stir until it thickens. Once cool, you can mould into your desired shape.

# Washable Finger Paints

## What you need:

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 4 cups cold water
- Food colouring

## What to do:

In a large saucepan, mix the flour and 1 cup of cold water. Stir until smooth. Add 3 cups of water and cook over a medium heat until it thickens and bubbles. Reduce heat and simmer for 1 minute, stirring constantly.

Add food colouring, cover and cool.



# Bubbles

## What you need:

- 1/2 cup of washing up liquid (watered down versions do not work as well)
- 3/4 cups of cold water
- 5 drops of glycerine (available in chemists)

## What to do:

Mix together to make bubbles!

# Bubble Art

## What you need:

- Bubble Mixture (as above)
- Paint or powder paint
- Straw
- Thin paper

## What to do:

Add paint to the bubble mixture, blow through a straw and once you have a bubble, gently cover with thin paper and you will have a bubble painting.





# Gloop

## What you need:

- 2 cups of cornflour
- Water
- Food colouring – try mixing the colours together

## What to do:

Add water to the cornflour until it becomes semi firm. You will now be able to mould this in your hands but when you stop moulding this will become runny. Add more water to make it runnier and gooier. You may wish to do this over a basin!

# Funny Faces

## What you need:

- Dry food – pasta, rice, pulses etc.
- Outdoor Collections – leaves, conkers, flowers, twigs etc.
- Round the house items – cut up sponges, lolly sticks, ribbon, straws, glitter etc
- Paper
- Glue Stick

## What to do:

Make funny faces with the items you have collected.





# Microwave Salt Dough

## What you need:

- 4 cups of flour
- 1 cup of salt
- 1 ½ cup of hot water
- Shape cutters
- Ribbon, glitter, beads, paint

## What to do:

Mix the flour, water and salt to make dough and then roll this out. Use the shape cutters to make the shapes. Cut a small circle at the top for threading ribbon. Place shapes on a microwavable plate and cook in microwave for 1 to 4 minutes increasing by 1 minute increments. Let them cool and then decorate!

You could even hang them up ... they would be great for Christmas tree decorations!

# Water Play

## What you need:

- Water
- Food colouring
- Variety of plastic bottles, containers, funnels, sieves, jugs etc.

## What to do:

Water experiments!



## Spaghetti Play

### What you need:

- Spaghetti
- Food Colouring

### What to do:

Cook up some spaghetti and then add some food colouring. Put the spaghetti into a bowl and allow to cool and then let your child play!

## Potato Stamps

### What you need:

- Potato
- Paper
- Paint

### What to do:

Wash the potato and cut in half. Draw a shape and cut round this. Press the potato stamp into the paint and then press onto paper.



# Ping Painting

## What you need:

- Strong frame i.e. shoe box
- Elastic bands to cover frame
- try various widths for different effects
- Paint
- Paper which will fit inside the frame
- Brushes

## What to do:

Place paper at the bottom of the frame. Stretch elastic bands over frame. Paint the elastic bands over the top of the frame. Ping the bands back which will release the paint onto the paper. Now you have your own modern art!

# Splat Painting

## What you need:

- 2 /3 colours of paint in plastic containers
- Plastic fly swats or spatulas
- Cut up sponges (these are the flies!)
- Large pieces of paper

## What to do:

Dip Fly (sponge) in paint and throw down onto the paper then swat it! This one is definitely for outdoors!

# Puffy Paint

## What you need:

- Self-raising flour
- Salt
- Food Colouring
- Water
- Thick paper or card
- Paintbrush

## What to do:

Mix one tablespoon of self-raising flour with one tablespoon of salt. Add food colouring and some water to make a gloop.

Paint the mixture onto the card. Microwave for 10- 30 seconds and the mixture will rise. Once cooled down, the mixture will harden.

Yoghurt pots are handy to put paint in if more than one child is using it.

# Natural Food Colouring/Dye

## What you need:

- A variety of coloured fruit and veg

## What to do:

Cut the fruit and veg into small pieces, using a cooking pot for each colour. Cover with water, bring to the boil and simmer for approximately an hour. Drain off the fluid, discard the fruit/veg and allow to cool.

Examples for colours are:

- Red cabbage = purple dye;
- spinach or green pepper = green dye;
- Tumeric = yellow dye;
- Red pepper = red dye

# Yo-Yo Splat Painting

## What you need:

- Balloons filled with water
- Elastic Bands
- Paint
- Large pieces of paper

## What to do:

Tie the elastic bands to balloons filled with water. Dip the bottom of the balloon in the paint and 'boing' onto the paper! These can also be used as a water yo-yo without the paint and when it bursts, it's even more messy fun!

# Jelly Paint

## What you need:

- 1/2 cup of natural food dye in any colour
- 1 heaped tablespoon of cornflour

## What to do:

Add the cornflour to a cooking pot and add the dye until it forms a smooth paste, then add more dye until it makes a milky liquid. Stir this constantly over a high heat until it starts to thicken. Turn off the heat and continue to stir until this becomes a thick clear jelly textured paint. Allow to cool and add to a small plastic pot. Use clean paintbrushes. This is useful for young children as it is not harmful if swallowed.

# Chalk

This does not have to be used only on a black board children also love to use chalk outdoors...



# Other ideas for messy play are:

- Shaving foam (sensitive is best) or aerosol cream – put in a container and add hidden treasures!
- Treasure Jelly\* – hide items in it before it sets!
- Make mud pies using a jug of water, some earth and empty plastic pots
- Readymade custard\*- add cereals and pulses to this
- Cut up sponges into different shapes and use these to paint
- Cardboard boxes, egg cartons, paint, glue, sequins, glitter, cotton wool balls, material, ribbon, shells, twigs etc. Give these to your child and let them use their imagination!

**...the list for Messy Play is endless**

*\*Not for consumption*

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We would love to hear from you, or your child,  
if they have more ideas for Messy Play!

Email: [info@playscotland.org](mailto:info@playscotland.org)

Play Scotland works to promote the importance of play for all children and young people, and campaigns to create increased play opportunities in the community. Formed in 1998 to support the Child's Right to Play and make children's right to play a reality in Scotland.

The work of Play Scotland is underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 31:

*"State parties recognise the right of every child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activity appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts".*



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