



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

Affordable Art Ideas

Scribbles on a page and splashes of paint may not look like much to you, but for young children, this is learning. For them, art is created for the experience, exploration, and experimentation. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, benefits of art include:

- ♥ **Encouraging creativity and imagination** - Art gives children the opportunity to explore different ideas, concepts, and perspectives as well as experiment with colors, shapes, and textures, and come up with unique creations. This process of creative thinking nurtures their imagination and helps them develop problem-solving skills.
- ♥ **Building fine motor skills** - Art materials, such as brushes, pencils, and clay, helps improve fine motor skills. As they grip, control, and manipulate these tools, their hand-eye coordination, dexterity, and finger strength are developed. These skills are not only important for creating art but also for performing tasks, such as writing, tying shoelaces, and buttoning clothes.
- ♥ **Expressing their feelings** - Art can help children develop a sense of ownership and pride in their creations. It can also be therapeutic, helping children process difficult emotions.

Art materials do not have to be expensive. You can create art experiences using many things found in your home. When selecting art materials, choose age-appropriate, non-toxic materials and give children time to explore and choose how they want to use them. You may have to give guidance and model how to use the items, especially if it's something new. Also, by talking with your child and asking questions about what they are creating, you are helping develop language and critical thinking skills. For example,



"What can we make with these materials?" Lastly, try not to use coloring pages, tell them what to make, or create a craft project for them to copy, as these actions limit the creativity of children. The best art experiences begin with presenting the art materials and letting them explore in their own ways.

In this newsletter, we will introduce some simple and affordable art activities that you can do with your infant, toddler, and preschooler.

This newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Resources:** for more information, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

Infants

Art for infants focuses on sensory exploration that allows them to explore different textures, colors, and materials in a safe and engaging way. Start by introducing simple art materials, such as water-based finger paints and dough. At around age 1, you can have them start using a sponge or a paintbrush with chubby handles or jumbo crayons. In addition, expose infants to different textures to feel the varied surfaces of objects. This helps infants get to know a variety of materials, which is a starting point for creating art experiences as they get older.

Try the following art experiences with your infant using items found in your home:

- ♥ **Texture Walk:** Find a variety of textured materials around your home, such as velvet fabric, bubble wrap, sandpaper/bark, tile. Place the materials on the floor and encourage your child to touch the materials or crawl over them. Describe how the materials feel. For example, "This one is soft and fuzzy. This one is smooth and cold."
- ♥ **Finger painting:** Tape a piece of paper to a washable surface such as the infant's high



chair tray or a cutting board. Have one or two paint colors in cups (such as recycled yogurt cups). Encourage your child to make patterns with their hands and fingers. Talk about what is happening and describe the paint textures and colors. For example, "This red paint is really slippery. Look at the dots you made!" Keep in mind that infants may want to eat the paint, so make sure the paints are water-based and non-toxic or you can consider making homemade paint with ingredients that are safe to eat.

Activity for Infants: *Homemade Finger Paint*

What You Need:

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|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 cup cornstarch | ½ cup hot water |
| ½ cup cold water | Food coloring |
| 2 T dish soap | Cups (such as recycled yogurt cups) |

What to Do:

1. In a medium bowl, stir together cornstarch, cold water, and dish soap.
2. Slowly add the hot water while mixing continuously. You can beat with an electric mixer on medium speed until the mixture is creamy.
3. Let the mixture cool.
4. Divide the mixture among containers/cups. Add a few drops of food coloring to each container and stir well to make a variety of colors.
5. This paint is best used on the day it's made.



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)

Toddlers

Toddlers typically are learning to hold utensils and tools with all their fingers. Use art to help strengthen their fine motor skills. Age-appropriate art materials include large crayons, washable markers, large paint brushes, non-toxic finger paints, and soft, moldable clay or playdough. These materials are easy for little hands to grip.

Try the following art experiences with your toddler using items found in your home:

♥ **Toilet Paper Roll Art:** Use empty toilet paper rolls to inspire art creations. For example, use the rolls to make circle stamps by dipping them in paint and stamping onto a piece of paper. Your child will learn the circle shape, but may also create pictures or patterns, especially if she has a variety of paint colors to use. You can also create an art bin using toilet paper rolls and small collage pieces such as shredded paper, cotton balls, yarn pieces, tape, glue, and crayons. Your child may be inspired to make puppets, flowers, or even binoculars. Supervise



these activities closely, and avoid using small items such as beads or buttons that could be a choking hazard for young children.

♥ **Playdough:** Use a washable surface to place the playdough on and allow your toddler to squish, knead, and roll it. Provide small props such as cookie cutters, plastic utensils, or nature items (leaves, sticks, pebbles) to help her be even more creative. Join in the fun and model different ways to use the dough or comment about what she is doing, such as "You are rolling the blue dough into a ball!"

Activity for Toddlers: *Homemade Playdough*

What You Need:

1 cup flour	½ cup hot water
¼ cup salt	Food coloring
1T cream of tartar	

What to Do:

1. Mix the flour, salt, and cream of tartar together in a large mixing bowl.
2. Slowly pour the water into the flour mixture, stirring as you pour. Stir until combined, then knead the mixture with your hands until the flour is completely absorbed. If the dough is too sticky, add more flour until it doesn't stick at all.
3. Divide dough into three different segments.
4. Add a few drops of food coloring to each dough segment to make a variety of colors.
5. Your child can play with the dough, using his fingers to knead and roll or using props to add to the fun.
6. Afterwards, store the dough in an air-tight container. It should stay fresh for a week.



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)

Preschoolers

To encourage preschoolers to take part in art experiences daily, give them access to safe art materials. Age-appropriate materials include paints (watercolor, finger, tempera), paint brushes, playdough, tissue paper, paper, child-safe scissors, glue, chalk, and markers. Additionally, you could offer recycled materials such as paper towel rolls, containers, boxes, newspaper, and wrapping paper. Have these materials on a low shelf that is accessible to use during play time.



Try the following art experiences with your preschooler using items found in your home:

♥ **Cardboard Box Art:** A big empty box is a great starting point for creative and imaginative play. You can simply have your child paint or draw on the box to use as a giant canvas, or you can see if she wants to transform it into something else. You could start by just talking about the box together. For example, ask, 'How big is it? Can you fit inside?' or 'What does it remind you of? A house? A car?' Then, have materials available such as markers, paper, foil, fabric, paper plates, or props to help her create.

♥ **Outdoor Art:** Art experiences can happen everywhere, including outdoors. Encourage outdoor art by painting with natural materials like flowers and leaves; exploring large-scale art like bubble wrap painting on boxes or large paper, and chalk murals on pavement; making temporary sculptures from mud and rocks; and using tools such as squeeze bottles or pipettes to paint with on large areas such as sheets or boxes. When painting outside, you could use water as the "paint" to have keiki still enjoy the process of art without worrying about the clean-up.

Activity for Preschoolers: Recycled Crayons

What You Need:

Mini muffin pan or oven safe silicone ice tray
Old crayons (broken and small pieces)

What to Do:

1. Remove paper wrappers from crayons and if there are large pieces, break them into smaller sizes.
2. Place crayon pieces in the pan, filling each circle at least half full. Try to group similar colored crayons together or mix them all up and create a rainbow colored one.
3. Bake at 250 degrees F for 15-20 minutes or until wax has completely melted. You may want to place the silicone tray onto a baking sheet to avoid melted wax drips or spills!
4. Remove from the oven and cool completely (overnight is best).
5. Once the crayons have fully cooled, flip pan over and tap each circle till the crayons pop out. (If they don't pop out, place the pan in the freezer for 10-15 minutes then try again.)



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)

How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

Physical Development

- ♥ Use and strengthen small muscles such as facial muscles, fingers, hands, and toes
- ♥ Develop eye-hand coordination

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Develop her unique identity
- ♥ Feel important and good about herself

Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Increase her observation, listening and understanding skills, and her attention span
- ♥ Build verbal skills, vocabulary, and use of descriptive language



Cognitive Development

- ♥ Develop her thinking and problem-solving skills
- ♥ Develop her curiosity about how things work

Kids in the Kitchen

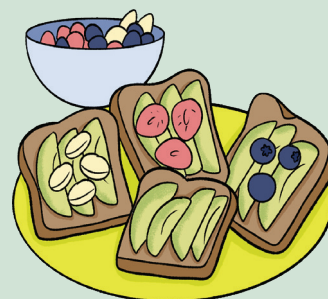
Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math (quantities, measurement), science (how matter changes), fine motor (stirring, pouring), and literacy (print awareness). As you make this recipe with your child, talk about kitchen safety. Show her how to handle items safely and allow her to do as much as she is capable of. Praise her efforts, and ask questions throughout the process to encourage her thinking skills. Most of all, have fun!

Fruity Avocado Toast

Adapted from CA Grown Kids <https://californiagrown.org/recipes/ca-grown-kids-fun-food-art-ideas/>

Ingredients:

- 1 large or 2 small avocados, pits removed and flesh scooped from peels
- ½ lime, juiced
- Pinch of salt
- 4 slices of bread, toasted
- A variety of fruit, sliced thinly



Directions:

1. In a mixing bowl, combine the avocado, lime juice, and pinch of salt.
2. Mash with a fork or potato masher until it reaches a smooth, spreadable consistency.
3. Spread ¼ of the avocado mash over each slice of toasted bread.
4. Encourage your child to add sliced fruit to the tops of each bread. Let her choose the colors and talk about what she's doing. For example, "I see you added red strawberries and green kiwi. I like the colors you chose." Serve immediately.

Resources

The Shape of our heARTs by Head Start

<https://headstart.gov/teaching-practices/play-head-start-way/shape-our-hearts>

This article shares all things related to art – materials, activity ideas, and adaptations for all ages and abilities. It also shares more resources to learn more about art, including videos and research.

Sesame Workshop – Art

<https://sesameworkshop.org/topics/art/>

This website features a variety of art resources that encourage creativity, learning, and fun!



Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the **Hawai'i State Public Library** www.librarieshawaii.org.

Infants and Toddlers

See, Touch, Feel: A First Sensory Book by Roger Priddy

This adorable book of baby expressions is perfect for capturing baby's attention and introduces them to their first book of feelings

Mouse Paint by Ellen Stohl Walsh

What happens when mice discover three jars of paint? Follow along to see what happens when the mice mix red and blue and blue and yellow. This book celebrates the joy of creativity.

Preschoolers

Mix It Up! by Herve Tullet

This interactive book has keiki following the instructions and suddenly colors appear, mix, and splatter. It's a great book to learn about combining colors in a fun and imaginative way.

Chalk by Bill Thomson

This wordless book encourages keiki to follow the story by looking at the pictures to discover what happens to three children who find a bag of magical chalk at the playground. It's a great story to encourage imagination!



Learning to Grow is a project of the University of Hawai'i, Windward Community College, with funding from the Hawai'i Department of Human Services. Visit our website at www.learningtogrowhawaii.org or visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/learningtogrowhawaii and Instagram @uhlearningtogrow