



**Messy Play**

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 which allows them to play freely.

Children can gain independence in Messy Play as you are allowing as they choose the shapes, materials and pictures they want to play with.

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 tablespoon of cream of tartar



Food colouring

## What to do:

Mix together in a saucepan and bring to boil. Cook for a further two minutes until it forms a solid lump and allow to cool. Knead on 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 cornflour



2 cups salt



3 cups cold water

## What to do:

Put salt and 2 cups of water in a saucepan and bring to boil. Mix rest of cornflour with 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 white paste



2 cups sawdust

## What to do:

Mix together to form a ball. Mould into shape as desired. Once hardened this can be painted.

# Sand Sculpture Clay

What you need:



2 cups fine sand



1 cup cornstarch



1 cup water

## What to do:

Put all the above into a pot and heat on the stove. Stir until 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 large saucepan mix flour and 1 cup of cold water. Stir until smooth. Add 3 cups of water and cook over medium heat until 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 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. Roll this out. Using your cutters, cut shapes. Cut a small circle at the top for threading ribbon. Place shapes on microwavable plate and cook in microwave for 1 to 4 minutes increasing by 1 minute increments. Let them cool and decorate.

Hang them up ...great for Christmas Trees!

# 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, add food colouring, put in a bowl and allow to cool and 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 paint and then press onto paper.



# Ping Painting

What you need:





-  Strong frame ie 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 using.



# Natural Food Colouring/Dye

What you need:



Variety of coloured veg and fruit

## What to do:

Cut veg and fruit 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 elastic bands to balloons filled with water, dip the bottom of the balloon in paint and bring onto paper! These can also be used as a water yo-yo without the paint and when it bursts 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 cornflour to a cooking pot and add dye until it forms a smooth paste, 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 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!
-  A jug of water, earth, empty plastic pots and make mud pies
-  Readymade custard\*
  - add cereals and pulses to this
-  Cut up sponges into different shapes and use these to paint with
-  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

This booklet has been compiled by Sharon McCluskie, on behalf of Play Scotland, and she would love to hear from you, or your child, if they have more ideas for Messy Play!

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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”.

# **[www.playscotland.org](http://www.playscotland.org)**

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