



The Basics of **Caring for Children** *In Your Home*

CHILDREN'S ART

Art is very important to young children. It gives them a way to let out their feelings and ideas.

Children can learn a lot through art. As children draw, paint, and make collages, they are learning about their world (colors, shapes, and sizes of objects.) When they use paints, glue, and markers, children are planning, trying out new things, and solving problems. As children mix paints, they learn to understand one thing can make changes in another. Art lets children make choices.

Children don't need to make a finished product to learn from art. This is sometimes hard for adults to understand. For young children, what they are doing is most important, not what they make.

COLORING BOOKS

Adults sometimes think that coloring books, patterns, and pre-cut pieces are art for children. These materials do not allow children to be creative and make their own choices. They end up making something that looks like what everyone else makes. It's hard for young children to color in the lines, use the "right colors", or make something that looks like what an adult makes.



Children show their feelings and ideas through art.

Art should be a time to allow the child's ideas to come out. Crafts tend to limit a child's creative ideas. The activities listed below do not allow a child to be creative.

Try to avoid using these:

- coloring books or printed pages to color
- creating a craft project for the children to see and make the same thing
- patterns to follow or lines to cut on
- telling a child what to draw, paint, or make
- finishing a child's work or telling a child to finish it to make it better
- drawing things for children

THE BEST ART FOR CHILDREN

The best art for children is to give them the art materials and let them explore them in their own ways. Let the children choose how they want to use the materials. They will learn more and enjoy art more when they can make their own artwork. No two art projects will be alike.

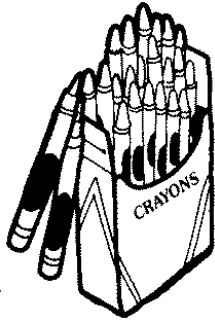
To an adult, great children's artwork often looks a lot like scribbles, lines, and even a mess on paper! Children learn by making these lines, scribbles, and messes. It's what they are doing that's most important.

Lots of Ideas for Painting

You can spend a whole year letting children explore with paint.
Change the activities by letting children work with different papers, painting tools, and paints.

TRY DIFFERENT PAPERS

- poster papers of different colors, sizes, and shapes
- tissue papers of different colors, sizes, and shapes
- cardboard of different colors, sizes, and shapes
- newsprint
- Sunday newspaper comics (try painting them with water)
- wet and dry papers
- bubble wrap (great for finger painting)
- paper bags
- paper plates
- pizza boxes
- wall paper
- wax paper
- wrapping paper
- aluminum foil
- freezer paper

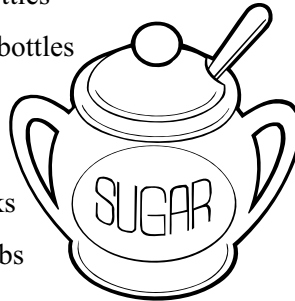
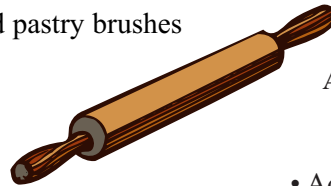


TRY DIFFERENT PAINTING TOOLS

- sponges
- twigs, sticks, or leaves
- dandelions
- pine tree branches
- grass
- eyedroppers
- cotton balls
- clean fly swatters
- old tooth brushes



- paint brushes (thin, thick, narrow, wide)
- popsicle sticks
- dish cleaners
- wire egg beaters
- vegetable and pastry brushes
- old dog toys
- rolling pins
- combs
- rubber balls
- squeeze bottles
- deodorant bottles
- ice cubes
- feathers
- plastic forks
- cotton swabs
- hair rollers
- coffee stir sticks
- corks
- toy cars and trucks
- kitchen tools
- body parts (elbows, fingers, noses, feet, knees, etc.)



What children do with art is more important than what is made.

TRY CHANGING THE PAINT

Add these to make different textures

- Add liquid soap to make paint slimy
- Add salt or sugar to make paint sparkle
- Add corn syrup to make paint shiny and sticky
- Add flour to make paint lumpy
- Add sand to make paint bumpy

If you want to learn more about art and young children, call the Better Kid Care office (1-800-452-9108) to ask for the learn-at-home unit, "Using Art Materials."

For more ideas on art projects, look for these books in your local county Cooperative Extension resource library:

Paint Without Brushes
by Liz and Dick Wilmes

Don't Move the Muffin Tins
by Bev Bos

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