



## Mix it! Clever Pouring, Stirring, Dumping, and Concocting

Even the very youngest children enjoy pouring, stirring, dumping, and concocting. These experiences provide children with opportunities to explore, wonder, and question. They learn to prepare, plan, predict, and gather important skills and information.

### Create A “Mix-it” Environment

The following are suggestions for inviting children to pour, stir, dump, and concoct! ***As always, before introducing any material, be sure it is safe, developmentally appropriate, and supervised accordingly.***

■ **TRAY WORK** — Trays are a wonderful platform to place different textures on to explore. Recycled foam trays, serving style trays, and old cookie sheets work well (the larger the better). Trays also support independent or small group work areas.

Tray materials to explore should be nontoxic and interesting to touch, look at, and manipulate. Explore salt, sugar, flour, rice, lentils, corn meal, oatmeal, dried beans, glitter, sequins, confetti, shaving cream, or finger paints.

Add supplies to further the investigation when ready such as sticks, cups, containers with lids, pitchers (with spouts), bowls, funnels, sifters, string, feathers, magnifying glasses, and items to make impressions or manipulate the material.

**Tip:** *It’s good to have small dust pans and dust brooms on hand for children to help clean up their work areas, as well as smocks to wear.*



*It is important to allow children to bring materials to different areas in the room. Who says blocks have to stay in the block area? Limiting children to one area can stifle the play and exploration as well as limit social development opportunities. Of course, some limits need to be reinforced, but in most cases, play should be permitted to cross into different areas.*

■ **COLOR-MIXING** — Children can create their own palette of multiple colors. Gather easy-to-use water droppers (eye dropper style), clear containers filled with bright, primary (red, yellow, blue) water colors (try using water with added food coloring), and white ice cube trays (white trays show the colors well). Children can squeeze and drip into each square of the ice cube tray and create beautiful color hues. NOTE: It's a good idea to practice this technique with an adult first.

Encourage authentic, natural discoveries rather than telling children what to mix. You may end up with a lot of "coffee" and "asphalt gray," but the children will have a worthwhile learning experience.

Allowing children to mix and prepare the paints for the art easel or art experiences is another way to involve color mixing. Children can name their created color. Sticky labels are a great way to write color names onto their container: "Max's frog green."

■ **DUMP SITES** — Most children enjoy the repeated activity of gathering and dumping. Offer items such as baskets, buckets, bowls, trays, trucks, wheelbarrows, boxes, tote bags, lunch boxes, and suitcases.

Have available items for dumping and loading such as blocks, recycled plastic lids, plastic fruits, play animals, cars, and people. Consider interesting items from nature that are beautiful to look at. You might offer pine cones, leaves, shells, grass clippings, small twigs, rocks,

and pebbles. In addition to dumping, it is fun to add plastic gutters, cardboard tubes (rug tubes are great!), or cove molding to slide items in and through!

■ **CONCOCTING POTIONS** — Older children may enjoy mixing real ingredients. Gather "potion" materials on a walk: flowers, leaves, grass, dirt, rain water, herbs, pine cones, and so forth. Other interesting ingredients for potions may be scented oils (vanilla, almond, lavender), food coloring, spices (cinnamon, clove), and glitter. Provide work areas, small pitchers of water, spoons or sticks to stir, and containers to mix potions in. Recycle plastic containers, or any clear container that potions can be mixed in. Record children's recipes in a potion book!

"Mix it" environments are inviting to the senses, provoke thought, and can also be very soothing.



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