

Finger painting

Rationale:

Finger painting gives your child the opportunity to explore through sensory experiences. He can experience the cool, squishy texture of the paint as well as playing with colour and patterns. It encourages his creativity and is a good way for him to express emotions. Finger painting also helps develop your child's fine-motor skills, which he will need for writing later on. It is also great fun!

Age range information

1-3 years

What you need

- Finger paint – store-bought or home-made (see the recipe below).
- Waterproof smock, apron or old clothes that will not be ruined by paint.
- Painting surface that is easy to clean – for example, a large sheet of paper, an old tray, a smooth benchtop or table that can be wiped down, or a plastic bag taped to your benchtop or table.
- Cleaning materials – sponges, a bucket of soapy water and a towel for drying hands.

How to do it

Once you have set up your painting surface and cleaning materials, it is time to get creative. Try these ideas to encourage your child:

- Spread paint on the paper, tray or benchtop and let your child make patterns with his hands and fingers.
- Join in. For example, if your child is making squiggles, make some of your own.
- Talk about what is happening using words to describe the textures and colours – for example, 'This red paint is really slippery isn't it? I love your spots. Can I make spots too?'
- Listen to music while you paint. Encourage your child to paint the way the music makes him feel.
- Make the paint more interesting by sprinkling it with glitter or adding some sand to create a different texture.
- Try making a print of the pattern by pressing a clean sheet of paper onto the paint.

To make finger paint

- 3 cups of boiling water
- ½ cup of corn starch
- food colouring

Put the corn starch into a large, heat-proof bowl with a little cold water. Mix into a smooth paste with a whisk or fork. Slowly add the boiling water while whisking continuously. You can add more or less water to get the consistency you prefer. Allow the paint to cool, then add a few drops of food colouring and mix (your child may like to do this part). You can also divide it among containers first if you want to make more than one colour. This paint is best used on the day it is made.

Adapting for children of different ages

Get your younger child started by covering the painting surface with paint and then moving his hands around in it. He will probably start to enjoy the sensation of the paint and the colour and texture he is creating.

Your older child might like to make his own choices about mixing and making colours. For example, he might like to use paint from separate pots of different colours and mix them together to form new colours. He might also be interested in making something permanent with his finger painting such as a painting on paper to display on the fridge.



Recommended Reads by the National Library Board

Recommended Reads

- [Beautiful hands](#)
- [Fingerprint bugs](#)
- [Paper & Paint](#)

Engage your child with simple activities at home! Check out some of these things you can do together:

- [Dandelion Card](#)