

Parenting Together

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 7
July/August 2021

The Importance of Arts and Crafts

Children are naturally curious. From the minute they gain control of their limbs, they work to put themselves out into the world to see how it all works. They explore, observe, and imitate, trying to figure out how things work and how to control themselves and their environments. Exploration helps children form connections in their brain; it helps them learn—and it's fun!



Art is a natural activity to support free play in children. Through art, children can practice many different skills and build creativity to create something new that has never been seen before! Art can also help children make sense of the world around them. Using different materials in an organic and unstructured way also gives children a chance to experiment as they practice a wide range of skills that are useful for life and for learning.

Skills practiced with arts & crafts

- **Cognitive development** – Art helps children learn and practice skills like making and understanding patterns and cause and effect (i.e., “If I push very hard with a crayon, the color is darker. If I push too hard, it breaks!”). They can also practice critical thinking skills by making a plan in their mind or a picture of what they hope to create and then follow through on their plan.
- **Fine motor skills** – Grasping pencils, crayons, chalk, paintbrushes, and scissors helps children develop their fine motor muscles. This development will help your child with writing, buttoning a coat and other tasks that require controlled movements.
- **Math skills** – Children can learn, create and begin to understand concepts like size, shape, making comparisons, counting and spatial reasoning as they create.
- **Language skills** – As children describe and share their artwork, as well as their process, they develop language skills. You can encourage this development by actively listening and asking open-ended questions in return. It is also a great opportunity to learn new vocabulary words regarding their project (i.e., texture).



Ways to encourage & support

- **Imitate your child** – Instead of drawing your own picture, sit down with your child and imitate their actions. Make big scribbles, small lines or practice drawing circles. This encourages them to be creative and not compare their work to yours.
- **Provide choices** – Gather a wide range of materials for your child to use like paint, colored pencils, chalk, play dough, markers, crayons, scissors, or stamps. Mix it up by bringing in unexpected materials like Q-tips, cars, small toys (e.g., dinosaurs for making foot prints), dry pasta, or beans. Recycled items work well!
- **Talk with your child about their work** – It's can be hard to decipher a child's drawings, even though the child knows exactly what it is. Ask open-ended questions like "Tell me about your picture." You can also describe specific things your child is doing by saying things such as, "You're making short lines, I see you are using red, green, and blue." You can also describe the actions your child is taking or the materials they are using by saying things such as, "You are using a soft paintbrush. I noticed you are making small circles. You are using two crayons at the same time!"
- **Keep it open-ended** – Instead of sitting down with a specific plan or outcome in mind, let your child explore, experiment and use their imagination. They might make a big mess or change their mind several times— that's okay! This is all part of the creative process.
- **Focus on the process, not the product** – Encouraging your child in the action of unstructured art helps

them build their own motivation to be creativity. This approach teaches them to express themselves freely, without worrying about what others think. If a lot of attention is given to the final product or we spend a lot of energy praising or criticizing the end result, a child may be more likely to focus on getting something "right," rather than working hard on a project. Part of focusing on the process involves encouraging effort. Letting a child know that you noticed how carefully they were working or how long they spent on a project will go a long way!

- **Let it go** – As long as a child is safe (i.e., not running with scissors), let them explore. They may spend the majority of the time sharpening colored pencils instead of actually drawing with them. Children learn through playing, exploring, and trial and error. When we give them freedom to discover, they are learning to create and experiment in new and innovative ways.

The Book Nook

Anywhere Artist

by Nikki Slade-Robinson

Juega con la naturaleza

by Victòria Seix

Be a Maker

by Katey Howes

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resources visit us at:

orparenting.org

References

The Importance of Art in Child Development

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/the-importance-of-art-in-child-development>

Art for Preschoolers

<https://montessorirocks.org/importance-art-preschoolers/>

Importance Of Art And Craft In Children's Development

<https://www.shoutoutuk.org/2019/08/16/importance-of-art-and-craft-in-childrens-development/>