

Home Learning Challenge: Making Playdough!

Playdough is a fantastic resource for children as it supports fine motor development. Manipulation of the dough develops dexterity skills, strengthening muscles in fingers which are essential for later writing. Incorporating different tools into the play, such as rolling pins and cookie cutters, provides the opportunity to develop hand-eye co-ordination. Playdough is also amazingly calming for children, giving them a sensory activity that is engaging, completely open-ended and accessible for all. If children are feeling a little stressed, anxious or cross, giving them a small ball of playdough to squeeze has a similar effect to a stress ball, providing a healthy way for children to release any frustrations!

With this in mind, the first home learning challenge of the year is a variety of activities that you might want to do with your children! You can use pre-made playdough, although a recipe is attached for those of you who feel up to the challenge of making it at home; this is also a fantastic maths activity for the children, who love to help weigh out the different ingredients and mix it all up.

Recipe

8 tbsp plain flour

2 tbsp salt

600 ml warm water

Food colouring

1 tsp vegetable oil (baby oil works too)

1 tsp cream of tartar-this isn't necessary but helps make the playdough go really stretchy!

Method: Combine dry ingredients in one bowl, and wet ingredients in another.

Slowly add wet ingredients to dry and mix together.

Dust a surface with flour, and gently knead the dough.

That's it! You're ready to play!

Activities:

Many household objects can be incorporated into playdough play. For example, children can press the bristles of an old hairbrush into playdough to make different impressions. Similar effects can be achieved with pieces of dry pasta, natural objects that you find such as leaves or conkers, and old buttons. Pieces of fabric, such as lace or denim, can also be used to create different impressions. This activity is so simple, but children really do become entranced with the different patterns and impressions that they leave, and they provide valuable talking points which develop a child's understanding of the world.

If you have an old garlic press, children can be encouraged to press playdough through it. This is a really tricky thing to do, but it is so beneficial for their fine motor development, and the children feel such a sense of accomplishment when they finally manage to do it!

Children love sticking pipe cleaners in playdough and then threading beads onto the pipe cleaner. This develops not only fine motor skills but also a child's numerical awareness and accuracy as they can be encouraged to count the beads as they thread them!



If you have any number or letter flashcards at home, children can be encouraged to roll playdough into sausage shapes and use it to support their formation of numbers and letters.

Finally, if your child has an interest (or obsession!) this can be linked into playdough play: please see the images below for inspiration!

