

Exploratory Play

Playing

Trying, lifting, lowering, moulding, digging, carrying, mixing, squelching, kneading, filling, poking, sticking, discovering, stretching, squeezing, balancing, stirring, bending, comparing, testing, pretending, initiating, challenging, pulling, pushing, dragging, feeling, touching, smelling, looking, investigating, listening, sharing, describing, compromising, splashing, tasting, tidying, wiping, finding, sorting, imagining, pretending, puzzling, focusing, observing, concentrating, persisting, believing, solving, planning, choosing, testing, checking, reaching, describing, reviewing, risking, predicting, learning...

Playdough Recipe

Ingredients:

1 cup of flour
1/2 cup of salt
1 tbsp. oil
1 cup of water
2 tsps. cream of tartar
(Add a few drops of food colouring if required.)

Method:

Mix all ingredients in a pan on a low heat. Cook slowly until mixture thickens to a ball. Stir vigorously. Remove when cool and knead well. Soak pan immediately.



**Sure Start
Children's Centres**
Beacon Heath, Heavitree & Polsloe & Whipton

Working with families and their children under 5
to build future generations of happy, healthy, confident children

in partnership with
Devon
County Council

**action for
children**

What Children Gain From Exploratory Play? This kind of play is open-ended allowing children to follow their own interests at their own pace

- **Developing language** – children use descriptive words such as ‘This feels mushy’, ‘Oh it’s stretchy!’ and ‘That smells disgusting!’
- **Solving problems**— children begin to find solutions to problems, like how to transport something from one place to another, or how to share out equipment fairly.
- **Being Creative**—children have the freedom to use their imaginations. Things can be whatever they want them to be. They are free to make links in their learning.
- **Getting physical**—children carry and lift as they transport buckets and boxes, and they poke and squeeze when they push buttons into dough or squelch paint between their fingers.
- **Being interested in the world around them**—children use their senses during exploratory play, especially touch, and they learn how things change when they are added to other things, such as adding water to dry sand or water to clay.
- **Cooperation**—children learn to think about their actions, such as not flicking sand, and they work together to make something happen, like holding a container steady while another child pours water into it.
- **Brain Development**—exploratory play supports the development of new circuits to allow more coordinated movements.



How to support Exploratory Play

- **Lots of resources** - provide all kinds of exploratory experiences for children, including water, sand, soil, mud, bark chippings, straw, leaves, paint, glue, cornflour, glitter, foam, clay and dough.
- **Outside** - provide lots of exploratory play opportunities outside, giving the children freedom to move about and transport resources.
- **Adult involvement** - get stuck into the play as well, sharing and exploring with the children.
- **Covering up** - encourage the children to wear old clothes or an apron so that there is no concern or stress about their appearance.
- **Clearing up** - this is part of the exploratory play experience. Leave enough time for a good clean up. Encourage children to help and try to make it fun.

Children often take the lead from adults around them as to how to respond to new experiences. Encourage them to be brave and explore by being enthusiastic, smiling and joining in.