



Messy play

Messy play gives children the opportunity to experience a wide range of sensory experiences. Prepared solutions such as fingerpaint, slime and gloop give children a wonderful opportunity to experiment with different textures and materials.

It is important to provide messy play at playgroup, as it may not be provided elsewhere for the child. Aprons and handwashing water nearby can minimise the mess, and having a number of adults around makes it quick to tidy away.

Messy play helps children:

Relax - it can be a soothing activity that helps release tension and frustration

Express their feelings in a creative way

Experiment with the properties of materials, e.g. does it hold its shape or pour or run?

Learn about colour mixing, patterns, design, texture and rhythm

Develop hand-eye coordination and practise the skills of pouring, measuring, mixing, scooping, and beating.

Children may:

Hesitate in accepting messiness

Explore the material tentatively

Become more involved and experiment fully with the material.

Adults can help

Providing messy play often gives children the opportunity to develop their skills and confidence with the medium.

Try not to worry about children getting messy – dress them in old clothes and aprons and be excited that they are learning from their messy experiences

Join in - model that it's OK to get your hands dirty

Keep the area orderly, provide aprons and water for washing hands

Provide equipment and fresh supplies of materials when needed

Encourage discussion, singing and experimentation

Supervise younger children to avoid getting materials in eyes.

Literacy and numeracy

Talk with the children about what they are experiencing - use words like slimy, runny, soft, warm, cold, lumpy, wet

Introduce chants, rhymes, songs, or music, if appropriate.

