

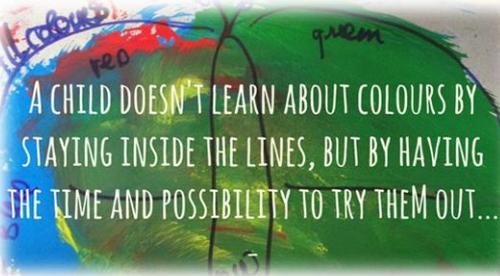
# Why messy play?

From birth, children learn and develop through play, but especially through unstructured, exploratory play....like messy play!

Messy play involves:

- children using all their senses in the process of exploration, especially the sense of touch
- offering children plenty of opportunity to mould and manipulate materials
- not having a focus on making or producing something.

Messy Play is designed with children's natural curiosity in mind. It encourages a positive approach to new experiences and exploration. There is no "right" way for children to do messy play. This builds self-confidence and self-esteem



A CHILD DOESN'T LEARN ABOUT COLOURS BY STAYING INSIDE THE LINES, BUT BY HAVING THE TIME AND POSSIBILITY TO TRY THEM OUT...

*Messy play is also a very sociable activity, but one that doesn't rely on words. Children can play together and share their discoveries without needing to explain things verbally.*

At Ollie's we write with sticks in mud, we use paintbrushes in sand and glitter to make marks, we explore with ice and jelly, we look at letters in alphabet spaghetti, we use water guns to shoot at given numbers, we explore our senses by touching lots of textures, we sniff the smelly playdough, we mould it to build up our muscles, we role-play....we enjoy it. We learn without even knowing about it!

Did you know? The malleable properties of play dough make it fun for investigation and exploration as well as secretly building up strength in all the tiny hand muscles and tendons, making them ready for pencil and scissor control later on. Ripping up paper – is their first stages of cutting and building up their hand muscles for scissors!

During messy play, children will be given many opportunities to speak and listen. They will use words and gestures to share resources, explain actions, negotiate plans and take turns.

Activities such as stacking, pouring and spooning will develop eye-hand coordination. Practicing cutting, writing in shaving cream and using tongs will develop fine motor skills. Hands-on activities will provide opportunities for children to compare textures such as smooth, rough, hard and soft.

This sort of play is important because its lack of a focus on making or producing something leaves the child free to explore all sorts of possibilities. It taps into children's innate curiosity about the world around them and their strong desire to explore and find out more.

Sorry about  
the laughter,  
volume,  
CHAOS, and/  
or mess, but  
we are  
**LEARNING**

Develops hand-eye co-ordination

**Physical Development**

Builds fine-motor skills

Teaches about sequencing and patterns

Improves body control, poise, balance and co-ordination

Explores colour, shape and texture in two and three dimensions

**Mathematical Development**

Offers opportunities for counting, measuring and sorting

Use of different media and material fosters imagination

**Creative Development**

Develops the concepts of size and shape

## The Many Benefits of Messy Play

Focus on process over product enables individual interpretations

Encourages representational play and storytelling

Informal context encourages confidence in communicating

**Knowledge and Understanding of The World**

Enables risk-taking and experimenting in a safe environment

Provides exposure to a rich and varied vocabulary

**Communication, Language and Literacy**

Teaches cause and effect

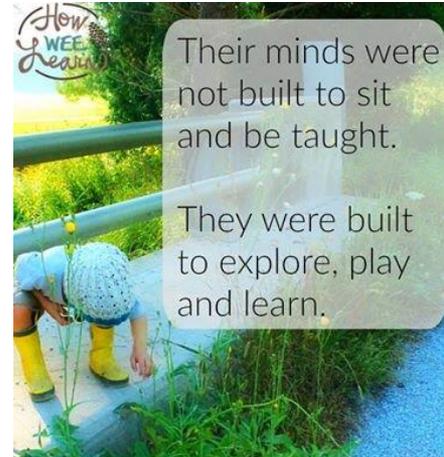
Fosters children's natural curiosities

Provides opportunities for mark-making

Encourages a positive attitude to new experiences

**Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

Builds independence through choice



# Get involved at home...

Here are some ideas messy play ideas for your little ones:

**Bath time:** Baths are not just about getting clean they're also an opportunity to play with water! So leave enough time for your baby or child to play as well as wash. You don't need bath toys, plastic cups or washed up yoghurt pots are just as good.

**Sandpits:** Digging in sand, feeling it run through your fingers, making sandcastles is all about exploring. Provide a few utensils such as plastic trowels, buckets etc. Provide water in tray or buckets, and some ways to explore such as plastic guttering to pour the water in.

**Paint:** Paint isn't just for pictures it's also a tactical substance to explore. Finger painting and handprints are about feeling the paint between their fingers as much as it is about making impressions on paper. You could even let your child experiment with body painting!

**Bubbles:** We love bubbles, whether it's bubble mixture blown from a wand, frothy washing up liquid bubbles in a tray of water, or shaving foam to mix up with paints.

**Play dough and slime:** You don't have to make anything in particular with play dough. It's just as important to explore: squeeze it, roll it, splat it, stretch it, squelch it! Glupee (usually cornflour and water), is a wonderfully tactile substance both for touching and watching as it slides off little fingers.

**Foodstuffs:** Pasta, cooked and chilled or dry, is great for exploring textures. Other dried foods such as cereals can be scrunched. Jelly, mashed potato and even baked beans all provide interesting sensory experiences.

**Natural world:** Puddles are there to be splashed in, autumn leaves to be jumped in, and mud to be dug around in! There are loads of messy play activities in the natural world.

**Make your own playdough:** 2 cups plain flour (all purpose), 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, 1/2 cup salt, 2 tablespoons cream of tartar, Up to 1.5 cups boiling water (adding in increments until it feels just right), food colouring (optional), few drops glycerine (optional- adds more shine!)

Mix the flour, salt, cream of tartar and oil in a large mixing bowl, Add food colouring TO the boiling water then into the dry ingredients (colour optional) Stir continuously until it becomes a sticky, combined dough, Add the glycerine (optional), Allow it to cool down then take it out of the bowl and knead it vigorously for a couple of minutes until all of the stickiness has gone. \* This is the most important part of the process, so keep at it until it's the perfect consistency!\*, (If it remains a little sticky then add a touch more flour until just right)

\*\*Add scented oils/fresh herbs, uncooked porridge, glitter etc to add more fun!

## **OTHER MESSY PLAY IDEAS :**

**SAND MOUSSE** You will need: sand, water, washing-up liquid, Squirt a really big dollop of washing-up liquid into the sand. Mix in water, a bit at a time, until you end up with a froth, whipped consistency. Adding powder paint can help to colour the mix and is fun for children to mix.

**CLEAN MUD** You will need: a bar of moisturising soap (grated), roll of white paper, warm water, Tear the toilet roll into lots of tiny pieces, add the grated soap and then add the warm water a little at a time until you get a frothy, white, mud-like consistency that smells really lovely. Add glitter for extra appeal.

**CLOUD DOUGH** You will need: a packet of flour, baby oil, Mix the baby oil into the flour until you get a breadcrumb consistency which stays in shape when squeezed – it smells and feels great!