

Play Dough: The Best Recipe for Fun and Learning

Source: Better Kid Care Program, Pennsylvania State University

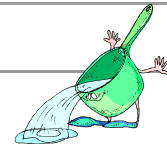
Play dough, a simple homemade modeling dough, has surprising value for young children. The simple dough made of flour, salt, and water is fun to make and to use. Play dough is a great activity for children, helping them grow.

The best kind of play dough is a cooked recipe. This recipe makes a soft, malleable dough that lasts through lots of play.

When you don't want to cook your play dough, this uncooked version is a quick, easy alternative.

The Best Cooked Play Dough

This recipe makes long-lasting play dough.



Ingredients:

1 cup flour	2 tablespoons cream of tartar
1 cup water	1 tablespoon oil
½ cup salt	food coloring

Directions:

1. Mix dry and wet ingredients separately, then stir together. Stir constantly over medium heat until the ingredients change from a lumpy paste into more of a rubbery blob. (The color will also change a bit, turning less pastel; if you use red dye it will become less pink and redder - to get a strong color, use about 1 tablespoon of food coloring.)
2. Turn out, cool and knead dough. Store in a zipper style plastic bag.

Note: You can also make this dough in the microwave. Microwave on high 3-4 minutes, stirring every 30 seconds. Let cool and knead.

The Best Uncooked Play Dough

This recipe is easy and ideal if you care for younger children and don't want to use a hot stove.



Ingredients:

¼ cup salt	¼ cup water
1 cup flour	food coloring

Directions:

1. Mix salt and flour in a bowl. Add water and food coloring.
2. Knead dough to make a clay consistency.

Note: This dough doesn't last as long as the cooked recipe.

Will your Child Eat it?

Don't worry about using these homemade play dough recipes. When children first have play dough they will taste it, but it is so salty that after only a few tastes children will discover that play dough is much more fun to play with than to eat.

Fine Motor Skills

Children are developing their hand muscles as they use play dough. This is called fine motor development. Fine motor activities such as play dough strengthen muscles and develop coordination that children will later need for skills such as writing. Give children plastic knives to cut the play dough and cookie cutters and rolling pins to roll out the dough and cut shapes.

Imagination and Creativity

Children who are beginning to play imaginatively can turn play dough into anything. Give them birthday candles and cake toppers and encourage them to shape play dough into a cake.



Dramatic play is valuable for young children: it deepens their thinking and helps them get ready for success in school. Dramatic play is even more important than teaching children letters or numbers!

Longer Attention Spans

Young children naturally have short attention spans, moving like a tornado from one activity to another. Sensory activities like sand, water, and play dough are activities that keep young children playing for longer periods of time, helping stretch attention spans.

Language Development

Children who learn more words through play as preschoolers are later able to learn to read more easily. The key is to talk about things your

child is doing or seeing or feeling. When you use words to describe a child's own experience, they will really learn the meaning of the words and remember them. ("The play dough is oily, can you feel it?" "You have a big piece on the bottom, and a small piece on top.") Add to what a child says. ("Yes, it looks like a snake, a long, green snake on our table.")

Emotional Development

Play dough (like other sensory activities) is calming and soothing. Sensory activities are a good way for children to release tension. While these activities may be messy, recognize that the mess is worth it because these activities are very relaxing and make the day go much more smoothly.

Great Props for Play Dough

Props are toys to offer with the play dough to help encourage imaginative play. Examples include rolling pins, plastic knives, and cookie cutters. Boost dramatic play by suggesting your child make pies. Provide little aluminum pie pans, plates, and two colors of play dough. Or try decorating pretend cookies. Use your imagination to add props to the play with play dough.

When to Offer Play Dough

Play dough is a great activity first thing in the morning or at the end of the day because it is calming and relaxing. Play dough is also great when you have an upset child; it is quiet play that is soothing. Offer play dough on a day when something special is happening: a party, a special event, or even before you leave on a trip. Play dough helps kids slow down on those exciting days.

Source:

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