

# Parenting the Preschooler

**Working for Wisconsin Families**

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## Art Activities for Learning at Home

Art experiences give children freedom to use their imaginations and encourage creativity.

Artistic activities for preschoolers aren't quite as grandiose as the name implies. Frankly, young children aren't skillful enough, artistic enough or really mature enough to consciously

produce works for art. They are more concerned with the process, not the final product. Allow the child to express herself; don't get too focused on the product.

### REMEMBER:

1. Because most art activities involve a certain amount of concentration, wait until your child has a long enough attention span -- that may be about 12 or up to 18 months of age.
2. Keep supplies handy and easy to use, so playing with art supplies doesn't have to be difficult for you or your child.
3. Have your child comfortably seated. Use a child-size table and chair set or a booster seat on an adult-size chair which is pulled up to the table. Protect the tabletop, if necessary. Children aren't known for neatness.
4. Display some of your child's art work. By doing so, you communicate to your child that he and his products are appreciated.



It's a good idea to collect a variety of materials to have available for art activities.

Crayons are a good choice. The young child needs jumbo crayons, about ½ inch in diameter, because she grasps them in her fist like a drumstick. Use any large sheet of paper. You can tape it to the table, if you like.

Young children use paints and crayons to communicate experiences and feelings. She'll explore the materials, and as she acquires manual control, she'll attempt designs. At about 4 years, she begins to make representational drawings.

Pencils are like crayons. Again, the thicker ones are easier for a child to handle. Carry a note pad and pencil in your purse for emergency use when you have to wait with your child. Because pencils are sharp, this play must be closely supervised.

Another scribbling medium is a slate. With colored chalk, a child can be occupied for a long time.

Felt tip markers are easy to manipulate and make brilliant drawings. Select water, rather than permanent markers.

Finger paints are traditional first paints, because they feel so delightful and are so direct. Finger painting is messy. Protect your table, have your child paint in a dry bathtub, or weather permitting, do it outside. Before buying or making finger paints, why not make sure your child enjoys finger painting? Have your child finger paint with food such as pudding, peanut butter or whipped cream. Use a surface that cleans easily like the tabletop or cookie sheet. If your child enjoys messing with any of these, chances are he's ready for the real thing. Finger paints are sold in toy and hobby shops or you can make your own.

Any shiny paper is good for finger painting. Simply dampen the paper, add a dollop of paint, and let your child smear it around.

If your child doesn't like to get her hands dirty, try this: Take a clear food storage bag (the self-locking kind is especially good) and put a few tablespoons of finger paint inside. Smooth the bag until finger paint covers the inside; press out the air; and tape the edges. Lay it on a flat surface and let your child draw on it with her finger.

Your preschooler is likely ready for painting with a brush. The best paints are poster paints and powdered tempera. The colors are bright and the paint is easy to spread. Supply brushes with thick handles and bristles -- about an inch across. Try to have one brush for each color of paint to prevent messy mixing in the jar. Brush painting can be done on a table, the floor, or an easel.

You can even paint without paint. Give your child a pail of water and a brush. Outdoors he can paint the house, porch, garage, driveway, whatever.

### Recipes for Homemade Art Supplies

#### Excellent Playdough

1 cup flour	1 tablespoon oil
½ cup salt	1 cup cold water
2 teaspoons cream of tartar	

Cook and boil until a firm ball. Knead in food coloring.

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#### Fingerpaints

3 tablespoons sugar	2 cups cold water
½ cup cornstarch	food coloring

Mix the sugar and cornstarch and then add the water. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until well blended. Divide the mixture into portions and add a different color to each portion. Add a pinch of detergent to help remove the paint from clothes.

#### Paste

½ cup flour	2 cups water
½ cup sugar	

Mix the flour and sugar. Add hot water and stir. Cook until it is thick. Allow the mixture to cool. Store in a covered container in the refrigerator.

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#### Clown Face Make-Up

2 teaspoons solid vegetable shortening
5 teaspoons cornstarch
1 teaspoon flour
3 to 4 drops glycerine
food coloring

Mix the vegetable shortening, cornstarch and flour to a smooth paste. Add the glycerine and food coloring.

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#### Iridescent Soap Bubbles

1 cup water
2 tablespoons liquid detergent
1 tablespoon glycerine (from a drug store)
½ teaspoon sugar

Mix all the ingredients. Make a blower from a bent pipe cleaner.

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#### Cornstarch Clay

(A smooth-textured, pliable material for making objects you want to keep.)

1 cup cornstarch	1½ cups cold water
2 cups salt	

Put salt and two-thirds cup water in a pot and bring to a boil. Mix the cornstarch with the remaining water and stir well. Blend the two mixtures together and knead into clay. Keep unused clay in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator. Air dry the mixture for permanent sculptures.

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