

# Hands-On Learning



Have you ever watched your child examine a rock or a leaf while turning it over in her hands? Or use clay or paint to make letters, numbers, or shapes? She's learning the way little ones often learn best—by touching and creating. Here are some fun on activities that let her explore language, math, and science.

## PLAY DOUGH

This childhood staple is ideal for squishy learning fun. Use store-bought dough, or make your own. For each homemade batch, help your youngster mix together 1 cup flour,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup salt, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup water. She can also add food coloring to make different colors. Then, try these suggestions.

### Storytelling sculptures

Write up a story together, and create play-dough characters and props to go with it. Your child might begin a story about a cookie monster and make cookies and a dragon. You could add another dragon and ask her what happens next. ("The dragon makes friends by sharing his cookies.") This encourages creativity and sharpens language skills that will come in handy when she writes stories.



### Number "snakes"

Your youngster will practice recognizing and writing numbers with this activity. First, have him roll dough into "snakes" and shape them into numbers, 0–9. Then, point to a number (4), and ask him to make that number of objects (say, 4 balls). He can count the items as he sculpts them. Take turns until you have the correct number of objects for each play-dough number.

## FINGER PAINT

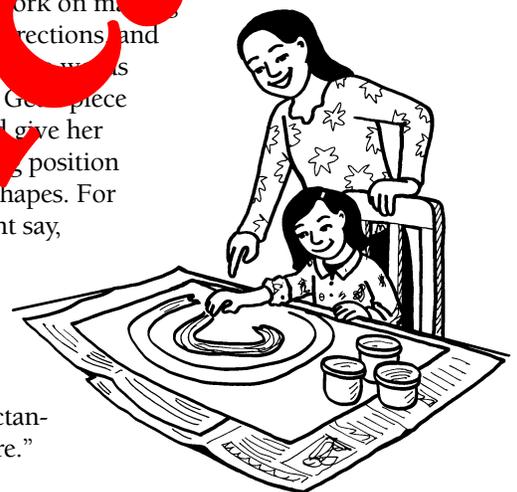
With finger paint, your child can not only paint pictures, but also write letters and words and experiment with shapes. Invite her to get his hands messy with these activities.

### Bathtub "graffiti"

Let your youngster finger paint on the sides of a bathtub to practice writing his ABCs. He could write a letter (o) and draw a picture of something that starts with that letter (basketball). Also, encourage him to try writing simple words like his name or words he has seen many times (cat, stop). *Note:* Always supervise your youngster in water.

### Shape painting

Your child can work on making shapes, following directions and understanding position words with finger paint. Get a piece of white paper and give her instructions—using position words—to make shapes. For example, you might say, "Paint a big circle. Now, paint a triangle inside the circle. Next to the circle, paint a square. Add a rectangle under the square."



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