

# Miss Katie's Kids Korner

## Home Craft Projects

by Katie Taylor

To prepare for this column, I asked some of the parents of children in my *Kindermusik* classes what activities they did with their child at home. Too often, this was a typical day: They would get the older ones off to school, then run some errands, watch a video, have lunch, take a nap, pick up school kids, eat a snack, watch another video, eat dinner, have a bath, go to bed. If this sounds like a typical day in your household, here are a few interactive craft suggestions to occupy your toddler to five-year-old.

The first rule of home craft projects is: FIND A SPACE. Easy clean-up is key to parent-friendly craft projects, so generally the kitchen is the most likely room in the house to set up shop. If you have a separate "children's room" (a.k.a. "wreck-room"), that can be good as well as long as it has a washable floor or a drop cloth. Creativity is messy.

With this age group, finger painting is #1. It's important to buy the thickest paint, (about \$1 a jar at Michael's and A.C. Moore). Thick paint not only doesn't drip as much but it's easier to work with. Paper can be purchased in 100 sheet pads at most stores. It doesn't have to be expensive. In buying paper for the toddler set, quantity can rank above quality. In monitoring this activity, keep in mind that you aren't looking for Picasso in every smear, nor do you have to put every picture on the front of the refrigerator. Just let them have fun and enjoy the sensual feeling of swirling paint on paper.

Finger painting can provide many educational opportunities, however. A sample conversation might go like this: "What color is this?" "Yellow." "Can you think of something else that is yellow?" "The sun." "Is this a picture of the sun?" "No, I was making a picture of Buddy. (the dog)" "But, Buddy is a black dog." "I know, but I wanted to make him yellow." "He looks good yellow."

Like finger-painting, play-dough is another "hands-on" activity. The extra benefit of play-dough is that sculpting helps strengthen the developing finger and hand muscles that will later be needed for writing, cutting, and catching balls. Here are two play-dough recipes you can make at home:

### FOR THE KITCHEN

1 cup Flour  
½ cup Salt  
1 cup Water  
2 tsp. Cream of Tartar  
1 tsp. Salad Oil  
Food Coloring

Mix together all ingredients and cook for 3 minutes over low heat. Stir well. Add

food coloring. Store in a plastic container. Kids love it and it is easier to clean up.

### NO BAKE PLAY-DOUGH

1 cup Flour  
½ cup Salt  
3 Tbsp. Oil  
1 package of Kool-Aid (for color and scent)  
½ cup Water

This is a great recipe, keep it in the fridge and if it gets too sticky after a while you just add a bit of flour to it! Keep it in an airtight container.

For the older child (4-5 years), tracing shapes and cutting is an excellent activity. You can buy pre-made shapes, but all of us have shapes at home. Circles and Rectangles are the easiest to find. For Circles, try empty oatmeal or Pringle tubes; Rectangles from cereal boxes, or Tic-Tac containers; Triangles can be made by cutting a rectangle in half or dividing a circle into a "pie." For those hard to find shapes like diamonds, you could draw and cut then out of heavy cardboard, then let the younger ones finger paint them for a surprise for older brother or sister to later trace and cut.

Cutting paper needs to be better quality than the newsprint pages the toddlers use for finger painting. Colored construction paper can be found in craft and dollar stores in packages of 100. The

thicker the paper, the less likely it is to tear and therefore the easier it is to cut. Once the shapes are traced and cut out, the Pre-K group can move on to their second favorite thing: GLUE. Glue sticks are wonderful, and if you remember to put the tops back on, all brands will stick. Have enough newsprint on hand so that your pre-K child can glue his shapes on a separate piece of paper. Following is a quick shopping list for home craft projects for the toddler to pre-K set (\*denotes items not covered in article):

Pad of newsprint paper  
Colored construction paper  
Marker pens  
Glitter glue pens\*  
Crayons  
Finger paint (jars of different colors)  
"Dot" paint (paint in easy to use containers)\*  
Child-safe scissors  
Glue sticks  
Shapes for tracing

Next month I'll explore the second rule of home craft – SAVE EVERYTHING – and offer suggestions on activities and projects for older children. In the meantime, turn off the videos and start creating! 

(Katie Taylor teaches *Kindermusik* in Ellenville and Monticello. She's currently accepting applications for the Spring semester, which starts in February. For more information you may contact her at 647-7291 or email: [ktyville@ulster.net](mailto:ktyville@ulster.net).)



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