

# Process, not Product

When you do art and craft activities with children, the **process** — how things happen — is often much more important than the **product** — the object you end up with.

## Exploring possibilities

Process is especially important for toddlers and young preschoolers who are just beginning to explore the world around them. They have lots to learn about the feel of finger paint between their fingers, the way it can be pushed around on paper and the way the colours mix together. It's not at all important that their painting be "beautiful." Their first attempts might end up a deep brown mixture of all the colours and that's fine. They discovered a lot about colours and textures.

## Discovering solutions

When you think more about process than about the product of art and craft activities, you will encourage children to try out new materials. You want them to *discover* different ways to put paint on paper, how different textures can be made to stick to one another, what happens when you try to build a bridge with egg cartons. While they are doing this, children also get a chance to develop their

problem solving skills. Let them try things their way, even if it doesn't always turn out. Not everything they make has to be put on show on the refrigerator door!

## Following a model

On the other hand, sometimes you may decide to put more emphasis on making a craft that looks like a specific finished product. Copying a model is a very different skill from creating from imagination. Older children may be ready to try following an example, once they've learned how materials and tools work. They may even enjoy the challenge, although there should always be room for individual creativity.

## Playing with materials

Even after the age of first discovery, children still need opportunities to just enjoy the process, without worrying whether their product will be "pretty" or "good." With that pressure removed, older children (and even adults!) can have fun playing around with materials and discovering new effects. When you plan art experiences, remember to keep a balance between aiming at the product and simply letting the process unfold.

## Basic Craft Supplies

Here are some basic craft supplies that will encourage children to express themselves through arts and crafts.

- child-safe scissors
- glue sticks, white glue or paste
- large and regular-sized crayons (washable)
- markers, some with different tips (washable)
- coloured pencils, chalk
- paint and paint brushes
- construction paper, newsprint, scrap paper
- popsicle sticks
- wool and fabric scraps
- empty boxes, milk and egg cartons, toilet paper rolls
- wrapping paper scraps, ribbon
- old catalogues, magazines, greeting cards

## Painting beyond brushes

Just about anything can be turned into a creative and interesting tool to paint with. Let your imagination run wild.

- brushes (small brushes, tooth brushes, old paint brushes, etc.)
- large paint rollers (attach them to an old broom handle and children can roller paint on the sidewalk)
- fingers and toes
- sponges, Q-tips, eye droppers
- squeeze bottles and spray bottles
- cookie cutters, toy animals (print with them)
- wooden blocks (glue things on them to create different textures)
- kitchen utensils (potato mashers make interesting designs)
- marbles (roll them around in a box lined with paper)
- straws (blow paint around on paper)
- toy cars (roll them around in paint, then on paper)
- pine branches
- carpet pieces, mittens that have lost their mate (print with them)
- toilet paper rolls (roll on paper; glue string or other textures to rolls)
- bubble painting (add bubble liquid to paint and blow to paint bubbles on paper)
- string, wool
- ice cubes (mix paint with lots of water in yogurt containers, add a popsicle stick for a handle, freeze)
- deodorant bottle (take ball out of empty deodorant bottle, fill with paint and water. Put ball back, roll paint onto paper)
- onion bags (fill with cotton balls and tie tightly, print with them)

by Betsy Mann

with help from Barb Stevenson, home child care provider, Ottawa