

April Web Artists

3's Friends: Wesley H., Min Woo L., Broden S., and Sean W.

4's Friends: Alice B., Maya D., Felix G., Naveen M., and John S.

Kindergarten Friends: Abigail M., John R., and Ali T.



Perhaps you wondered ...

... why we offer preschoolers playdough activities so frequently.



Working with playdough strengthens children's hand muscles, encourages eye-hand coordination, and builds tool use skills – all in ways that are within their developmental reach. This strength and skill are prerequisite to using tools for drawing and writing, so daily or weekly practice is valuable in reaching that eventual goal. Meanwhile, working at the playdough table also affords children the opportunity to learn social interaction skills for sharing, conversation skills for communicating their ideas and making their requests known, and artistic expression skills for both visual arts and pretend play. Adding safety scissors to the set of playdough tools gives children a chance to practice cutting as well, while not needing to coordinate both hands to maneuver the paper.

While children are building hand strength and skill by using playdough, we scaffold their drawing and writing (i.e., make it easier for them) in a variety of ways. We use fat markers because they are easier to grasp and make satisfying marks on paper without children needing to apply consistent pressure (which is necessary with crayons and pencils). We also provide letter stamps and stickers so that children can begin using letters even before being ready to write themselves. Teachers may take dictation so that the children can express ideas well beyond their writing capability.

We also focus mostly on encouraging effort and expression rather than on the exact formation, sizing, and alignment of letters so that children will be motivated to write frequently. As with most skills, repeated practice is key, so we offer children many opportunities to develop their skills. [NOTE: Both photos are the same child's hands, one at age 3 and one at age 5.]



Children's School Famous Playdough

1 cup White Flour	½ cup Salt	2 teaspoons Cream of Tartar
1 cup Water	1 tablespoon Oil	1 teaspoon Food Coloring

NOTE: We usually double the recipe. Giant Eagle sells LARGE containers of Cream of Tartar.

- Combine flour, salt, and cream of tartar in a saucepan. Mix water, oil, and food coloring in a separate bowl and stir them gradually into dry ingredients until the mixture is smooth.
- Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until a ball forms.
- Remove from heat and when the mixture is just cool enough to handle, knead until smooth.

Also, you can add vanilla, instant coffee, etc. to add aroma, or add glitter to enhance the visual sensation. Be creative! The playdough stores best in a ziplock bag in the refrigerator.