

5 Simple Art Explorations

With a few ingredients from the home, any day can become a colorful learning experience. Below are a number of art experiences used at Chicago Children's Museum that can easily be re-created at home using food dye and other simple materials you may already have in your cabinets.

Rainbow Water

This activity will teach children about color mixing.

Materials:

- Small, clear cups – old jam jars work great for this
- Food dye or liquid watercolors
- Water
- Eye droppers

Directions: Pour water into small cups or into a sectional platter. Dye each cup or section of water with a drop of food dye. Help children to pour a few drops of colored water into a separate cup. Add a few drops of another color to see what new color you can make. Try different combinations. *What happens when we mix red and blue? How about blue and yellow? Can you make a new color? What would you name your new color?* As an added motor-skill exercise, have children use eye-droppers to pick up and squirt the colored water into a cup.

Sudsy Exploration

This activity will introduce children to texture and color. (Do this activity on a table covered with an old plastic or vinyl tablecloth for easy clean-up.)

Materials:

- Foam shaving cream
- Food dye

Directions: Fill a few different bowls with shaving soap. Mix in a few drops of food dye to make the soap different colors. Let children explore with the foam. *What does it feel like? Can you mix a new color? Can you build a soapy mountain?* If you spread some of the soap over the vinyl tablecloth, you can also have children use their fingers to make swirls, lines and patterns in the foam. *Can you draw a circle? A swirl? A long line?*

Beautiful Bubbles

This activity will help children learn motor skills as well as learn about cause and effect.

Materials:

- Food dye
- A few bottles of bubbles with blowing-wands
- Large white sheets of paper (if you do not have large sheets, you can lay out a number of smaller sheets)

Directions: Add a few drops of food dye to the bottles of bubbles to make different colored bubbles. Have children blow the bubbles over the area where the paper is on the floor. Watch what happens as the bubbles land on the paper. *Can you see what is left behind when the bubbles pop on the paper?* The bubbles leave behind a *print* of themselves on the paper. Have children blow more bubbles to make a beautiful bubble design!

Color Freeze

This activity will teach children about mixing color as well as open a conversation about hot and cold.

Materials:

- Water
- Food dye
- Ice cube tray
- White paper

Directions: The night before you would like to do this activity, dye water to make different colors and pour into ice cube tray. (Make sure you add a significant amount of dye to make the colors bold). Freeze overnight to make colored cubes. Once frozen, give the ice cubes to children to play with. Try dragging the colored cubes across white paper. *What do you see? Can you make a drawing with the ice cubes? What happens to the ice as you hold on to it? What happens to the ice as it sits out in the sun?*

Dough Delight

This activity will teach children about texture as well as give them the opportunity to build and sculpt.

Materials:

- 4 cups flour
- 1 cup salt
- 1-1/2 cups hot water (from tap)
- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- Food dye

Directions: Have children help you mix the salt and flour together. Feel the powdery texture. *What does it feel like?* Mix food dye into the water. Now add the colored water and oil to the mixture. Have children help mix the ingredients together. *How does it feel now? What is happening to the powdery mixture?* Knead the dough until it's a good consistency. Offer children rolling pins, cups, bowls, cookie cutters, or plastic utensils to explore with. *What shapes can you make? What can you build? What tools are you using?*

Remember, sometimes the simplest materials can make the most dynamic learning experiences. Enjoy creating together!