

Messy play

Korihori pōrehe



Messy play gives children the opportunity to experience a wide range of sensory experiences. Messy play solutions such as finger-paint, slime and gloop give children opportunities to learn about different textures and materials.

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Te Whāriki

Exploring through messy play supports learning across all the strands of Te Whāriki.

In particular, messy play supports the **Communication strand**, where children discover and develop different ways to be creative and expressive. Messy play might also support children's development in the **Exploration strand**, where children gain confidence in and control of their own bodies, including active exploration with all the senses and the use of tools, materials and equipment to extend skills. Messy play materials provide satisfying sensory experiences that can stimulate emotional well-being. Messy play experiences are often enjoyed as a group and they support the **Contribution strand** by providing opportunities for children to work with and alongside others.



Messy play can help children to

- relax – it is a very soothing activity
- experiment with and explore the properties of the solutions e.g. does it hold its shape or pour or run? What happens when substances combine?
- learn about colour mixing, patterns, design, texture and rhythm
- develop hand–eye coordination and practise pouring, measuring, mixing, scooping and beating skills
- share in group activities.



Adults can support children by

- joining in to show them it's okay to get messy
- telling stories and using chants, rhythms, songs and music while playing
- encouraging them to tell stories and sing while playing
- not worrying about them getting messy – dress them in old clothes and aprons and be excited they are learning from being messy
- watching younger ones to prevent them from getting the solution in their eyes
- encourage experimentation
- use descriptive word such as slimy, runny, soft, warm, lumpy, wet.

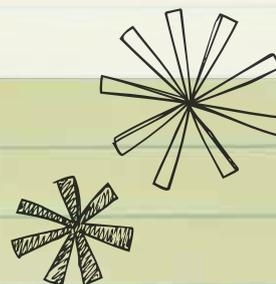
Providing for messy play

Make sure there's enough room for messy play, and try and keep the messy play area away from the other equipment. Give children a flat, smooth surface to work on; low tables or water baths/troughs are ideal for group play. Children can be provided with individual trays for more individual experiences. It is good to set up a place close by for hand-washing. Lining the floor or providing messy play outside can make cleaning up easier. Rhythmic music and messy play go together nicely.

Ideas for equipment

The great thing about messy play is that little additional equipment is necessary – children use their hands and fingers, feet and bodies to experiment with. Assorted mark-makers can be introduced. Try anything that might make an interesting pattern: brushes with different-strength bristles, cardboard scrapers–flat or with patterns cut into the bottom–natural materials such as leaves, twigs, stones, flower or seed heads (minus the seeds).

Try second hand shops for Formica dining tables and cut the legs down. If you do not have access to a large table, try a large sheet of plastic on the ground.



Making gloop

1. Slowly add one cup of cold water to two cups of cornflour in a bowl. Stir until the water is absorbed by the cornflour. Add colour if you like. Put the gloop in ice-cream or large containers with spoons, cups and other utensils.
2. Great just with fingers on a flat surface.

Making slime

1. Dissolve one cup of soap flakes in two litres of warm water. Add colouring if you like. Allow the mixture to stand until it becomes thick and slimy. Beat the mixture with an egg-beater to make it frothy.
2. Put the slime in a wide, open container or trough with egg-beaters, spoons, funnels, cups, sponges, sieves and whisks for children to experiment with.
3. Slime can be kept for several days in a covered bucket.

Note: Be sure to check first that children do not have skin allergies. Some children's skin can be sensitive to soap flakes.

Making finger-paint

1. In a large bowl or basin mix two cups of cornflour with one cup of cold water. While stirring this mixture slowly, pour in the boiling water. Keep pouring and stirring until the mixture turns smooth and thick. Once the mixture turns smooth and thick (add more hot water if the mixture is too thick) add half a cup of soap flakes and stir well. Split the mixture into different bowls or pots and add tempera paint into each bowl or pot, making sure each pot has a different colour.
2. Put the mixture into small containers (such as a margarine container) and finger-painting can start.
3. Finger-paint can be kept in the fridge for a couple of days.

Note: Some children's skin can be sensitive to soap flakes. If this is so, then leave it out of the recipe.

There is a book of play recipes available from the Playcentre Federation:

www.playcentre.org.nz/publications.php?PT_page=4 or visit your local Playcentre Shop.

