



Help Your Child Be Creative!

Your child is already creative. Whenever he sings a song, draws a picture, makes something for you out of clay, or pretends to be someone else for fun, he is being artistic. The arts – dance, drama, music, literature and visual art – helps your child to release his creativity.

The arts are an important part of your child's becoming ready to start school. There are many ways to help your child explore the arts. And you'll both have fun! Try:

YOUR INFANT:

- Talk, rhyme, and sing to your baby. Hold her often. Touch and stroke her with love. Smile at her, and react when she smiles at you. Respond to her feelings!
- **Play music in your house. Sing – you don't need to be a pop star! When your baby "sings" back or responds, react to him.**
- Dance! Move your baby's feet and hands to the beat of the music.

YOUR TODDLER:

- Hang pictures at your toddler's eye level. Name, describe, and point to things in the pictures. And ask your toddler what she sees in the pictures.
- Let your child draw with non-toxic markers, crayons, and finger paint. Make something together out of clay: a bowl, an animal. Hang his artwork on the walls and on the refrigerator. Praise his work. Let him know you're proud of him!
- Read to your toddler every day. Use character voices and body movements to act out the story. Let your toddler join in – for instance, to make a cow's "moo" or a cat's "meow." Read rhyming poetry to your toddler.
- Put on a play or a puppet show. Make up songs and sing them.
- Play Simon Says, but try it without words: just watch each other and copy each other's motions.

YOUR PRESCHOOLER:

- Dance! Listen to different kinds of music. Let your child choose a radio station or a CD to play.
- Make your own musical instruments: a drum from a box or a coffee can, a flute or a saxophone from a cardboard tube, a piano with "keys" drawn on paper. Have a concert!
- Create things. Draw with chalk on the sidewalk. Pretend that a paper tube is a telescope. Make a skyscraper with empty boxes and tape or glue. Ask your child to make a painting especially for you, or a collage (a piece of art using lots of different materials).
- Build a quiet hideaway under a table using blankets or sheets. Make a door or a fence using wooden or cardboard blocks or other safe objects. Play in your hideaway with your child. Let him make it anything he wants: a house, a space ship, or a boat.

ParentTips is a monthly resource for parents with young children.
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