

create & play

Toddlers are busy little people making the transition from being a dependent baby to a more independent child. As toddlers start to explore their environments, there are many opportunities for them to develop and learn. Providing engaging creative play as they do so will help them develop their understanding of their world.

Getting started

Toddlers don't ask "What are we going to do?", they just like to get started! Encourage mark-making and use of paints in whatever manner inspires them. Think about how you can extend activities by introducing new items or tools to extend their concentration. Plan clearing up before hand, with newspapers or a tarpaulin on the floor. Have a washing up bowl ready – many toddlers love using these, so they can be an activity in themselves!



1 Make your own salt dough

This will help your toddlers explore and compare different textures, and experiment with items changing shape and colour. You'll need

- equal amounts of salt and flour, mixing bowls, a table cover, water, wooden spoons and paint.
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- **■** Mix the salt dough in a bowl using your hands and talk about how it feels.
- **■** Poke a finger or two into balls of the dough and squeeze a splodge of paint inside them. Seal the balls with paint inside and let your toddlers squeeze them until the paint starts to appear. You can do this with different coloured paint and create a number of coloured balls. Roll them out and squish them together, creating a friendship rainbow.
- **■** Bake in the oven at a low temperature for four hours or until hard, then proudly display!



2 Recycling models

Helping your toddlers transform one item into something else assists creative thinking and problem-solving, and significantly develops their imagination.

- **■** Gather items together from your recycling pile. Encourage the children to help you select some of the items, and talk about the different shapes and sizes. You could try
- putting some boxes into other boxes to carry them to the area where you will be modelling. Think about what you will use to join the items together – e.g. sellotape and brown tape stick items together well, but can't be easily painted on, so you may want to consider masking tape, which sticks and can be transformed with paint and collage materials.
- **■** Use positive words to encourage your child, asking questions such as "Tell me about what you have made", "How did you do that?" or "That's fantastic – tell me what you did?". It doesn't matter that the children aren't able to respond in detail, you can then help them answer them: "Did you collect the boxes from the recycling? We stuck them together with the sticky tape, do you remember? Then we got the paint out and changed it, didn't we..." This will help your little ones not only be confident in making choices but also help them understand that one thing happens before another and that their actions can create positive change.
- **■** Children often have a high attachment to things they've made, and are rightfully very proud of them. Have a special display area where they can look at and touch their creations. Chat about them together: "Do you remember when you made this painting?". Show others their masterpieces too, and encourage them to be proud of their own ideas and actions.

For further creative play activities and The Creation Station's new 'Play on a Budget' activity download sheet, visit thecreationstation.co.uk

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The Creation Station franchises run regular creativity classes for babies, toddlers and children up to the age of 11 across the UK. To discover more about how they can support the work you're doing in your setting, please call Sarah on 0844 854 9100, email her at sarah@thecreationstation.co.uk or visit thecreationstation.co.uk and claim your free info pack.

