

Messy Play



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Children love when adults play with them - fully involved and exploring next to them. The more interactive the play, the more comfortable the child becomes and often, the more talkative. So, don't just watch and don't be afraid to get dirty in sand, water, playdoh, etc. It's fun and typically easy to clean up if indoors. In fact, cleaning up can be part of the play. Or do these activities outside, where it shouldn't matter.

1. Follow the child's lead. Make various shapes with the substance.
2. Dump water or sand. Practice pouring into containers. Talk about size.
3. Discuss what's happening while playing. *Look, I spilled water on my hand. Where's your hand? My hand. Your hand.*
4. Discuss how the material feels. E.g., *The playdoh's cold.* Or *It's squishy.* Or *The sand is scratchy.*
5. Hide your hand under or inside the substance. Say, *Uh-oh. Where's my hand?* When found, say, *You found my hand. There it is!*
6. Hide small objects or beads inside the substance. Say, *Find the octopus.* Or *You found a bead. And more beads. Let's make a pattern. Red, red, blue...red, red, blue.*
7. If a child needs help with a particular sound, like /s/, hide objects in the substance that begin with that sound. Encourage labeling when found.
8. Use plastic animals, vehicles, or sticks to make tracks in playdoh or sand. Discuss how it looks.
9. Create roads through the sand, dirt or playdoh. Push vehicles or animals through the paths. *Is it moving fast or slow? Is it jumping or running?* Etc.
10. Label playdoh colors. Then mix and label again. Explore with patience.
11. Roll, pound, squish, flatten playdoh, labeling the actions.
12. Imitate the child's sounds. Expand upon their vocalizations. I.e., If they say, *Car.* You say, *Yes, car. You found a big car.*

