

Malleable Play Playdough

What is malleable play? Malleable play allows children to explore special materials which can be shaped by applying pressure through rolling, squeezing, pulling or pushing. Playdough, clay and Plasticine are suitable materials for use in early years.

Why is malleable play important? - This type of play gives children the opportunity to explore and find out what they can do with different materials and to describe how they feel. They can develop their hand to eye control, fine motor skills and muscles. Children enjoy making marks and with their hands and tools to create patterns. Malleable play activities supports language and communication by using descriptive words to describe their creations.

Getting started... It is best to introduce children to playdough when they 18 months or older. When faced with a new material children need time to find out what it is and to explore its properties.



- Initially, give your child a piece with no tools and let them explore with their hands and eyes.
- When first exploring playdough children may taste it, but as it is very salty they soon discover it is more fun to play with rather than eat!
- Place the piece on a flat surface which can be easily wiped down after they have finished playing.
- Have a bowl of warm water nearby for washing hands afterwards and wear an apron to protect clothing.

Equipment ideas

Once your child is familiar with the playdough you can introduce other items into their play to make marks and patterns, such as rolling pins, plastic cutlery and shaped cutters. You can also add food colouring, spices, cocoa powder or other aromas. Children also enjoy combining playdough with toy cars or animals which extends their play.

Do not rush the play experience. Give your child reassurance through eye contact, gestures and language which encourages and praises them. Show an interest in what they are doing.



Top Tip - Playdough can be purchased but it is cheap and fun to make at home. You can make a quick uncooked version or a cooked version which can be stored in an air tight container the fridge for up to 2 months. Please see the recipe sheets on our Facebook page.

For safety reasons never leave your child alone with malleable play activities, and always supervise their playtime. Be aware of the child's food and, or skin allergies.