

The benefits of playing with play dough

We all know that play dough is fun and popular with young children, but apart from making a mess what is it really good for? Here are the fabulous benefits of allowing kids to play with play dough and the many learning opportunities that happen along the way!

Using play dough (or in fact any type of dough) with young children is beneficial in so many ways. Here are some ideas of how fabulous it is, divided into the areas of development that it helps

Fine motor development

Play dough is fun for investigation and exploration as well as secretly building up strength in all the tiny hand muscles and tendons, making them ready for pencil and scissor control later on.

Poking in objects and pulling them out of play dough strengthens hand muscles and co-ordination.

It can be squashed, squeezed, rolled, flattened, chopped, cut, scored, raked, punctured, poked and shredded! Each one of these different actions aids fine motor development in a different way, not to mention hand-eye co-ordination and general concentration.

Imagination and Creativity:

Play dough is the perfect medium for numerous types of imaginative play and can represent so many things in a child's eyes. The list is as endless as a child's imagination!

Calming and soothing:

As any adult who has played with dough can tell you, the effects of all that squeezing and pummelling are great for stress relief and can feel extremely therapeutic! Little children can struggle to express their emotions and using

dough while talking and singing can really help that process.

In more focused play, play dough can be used as a fantastic way to practise letter and number work. Children can form letters of the alphabet, spell out their own name, make numbers, form 2D and 3D shapes, compare lengths/ thicknesses/ weights, count out rolled balls to match numeral cards, match and sort by colour and SO many more ideas too!

Science and Discovery:

Making the play dough together with your child can lead to lots of questioning and prediction skills. The child gets to explore and observe the changing state of materials in a hands-on way, and be filled with wonder as the bowl of unrelated ingredients comes together to form a sticky then smooth and squishy ball of dough! We often take these things for granted, but in the eyes and hands of a child that's quite some transformation!

Following a recipe and instructions, counting out cups, stirring and mixing and just being able to spend time on a collaborative project with an adult are all meaningful and important experiences too!

***What an incredible substance
play dough is!!***