

OWL with Playdough!

Playing with playdough provides endless learning opportunities for your child – especially when you join in the play and talk about what interests him.

Because playdough is an “open-ended” activity (i.e. your child can decide what he wants to do with it), it provides great opportunities for your child to:

- Be creative
- Expand his ability to pretend and imagine
- Learn some new words when you talk about his interests and actions
- Have fun!



It all starts with OWL

Your child will learn most when you follow his lead and talk about what interests him, but in order to do this effectively, you must always start by OWLing.

Begin by placing the playdough in front of your child. For this first time, don't use cookie cutters or other shapes. Give him a plastic knife (if he's old enough), some stir sticks, large stones and buttons. This will encourage him to be creative since he can do anything he likes with these! Then:

Observe your child silently and see what he does. This is your chance to really see what your child is doing with the playdough. Often, children don't begin with an idea of what to do; they manipulate the playdough first and when it starts to look like something they recognize, they then start to turn it into something specific. To give your child time to come up with his own ideas, just observe without speaking, suggesting or instructing him.

Tip!

Make sure you have your own playdough in front of you so that when you're ready to join in, you won't have to take your child's playdough away from him.

Wait – Sit quietly and avoid showing your child things he could do with the playdough. You can squeeze or roll your own playdough slowly while watching what your child is doing with interest. Your goal is to give your child an opportunity to do what he wants to do first.

Listen to what he says, without interrupting. Respond and show interest, but avoid telling him what to do and don't ask questions that test, such as, “What are you making?” He might not know yet – he's still experimenting!

Now that you've OWL'd and given your child some time to decide what he wants to do with the playdough, you're ready to **Join in the Play** and **Follow Your Child's Lead...**

To join in the play and follow your child's lead...

- **Copy what he's doing** – Use your own playdough and make something similar to what he's making. This is likely to get his attention and he will probably comment on it or ask you what you are doing – a good beginning to the conversation!
- **Playfully build on what your child says or does** by commenting or adding something to his actions and ideas. For example, if your child puts a ball of playdough on the end of a stir stick and says, "I have a lollipop", you can say, "That looks delicious! I think I'm going to make a lollipop as well – a really big one that needs 2 sticks to hold it!" Then make your lollipop with your playdough and wait for him to say or do something again.
- **Encourage pretending**. For example, if your child rolls his playdough into a long snake-like shape, do the same and add an idea. For example, make the snake noise "ssss" and talk as if you are a snake ("I am Sammy the snake and I am coming to see what's for lunch"). Then **observe, wait** and **listen** again to see what your child thinks of that and keep building on his comments or actions to keep an interaction going.

Tip for making it even more fun - Make your own playdough!

Add to the fun by having your child help you mix the following ingredients together to create your own playdough:

- 1 cup of flour
- 1 cup of water
- 1/2 cup of salt
- 1 tbsp of oil (any oil will do)
- 1 tbsp of cream of tartar
- 1/8 to 1/4 tsp of food colouring paste



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