



TEACHING TOOLS AND ACTIVITIES

MAKING STORIES



Fostering creativity – being able to think outside the box, brainstorm, generate new ideas and improve existing ones – is one of the core 21st Century skills that has received extensive attention[16]. Helping young minds to imagine "what if" and "what could be"[17] are the roots of creative thinking. Parents can support this by offering guidance rather than instruction and helping young children to be flexible in their thinking as they discover and generate new ideas.[18]



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

PLAY-DOH COMPOUND



A FEW SMALL TOYS, SUCH AS PLASTIC ANIMALS OR VEHICLES



FLAT WORK SURFACE

WHAT TO DO

STEP 1

Place the Play-Doh cans and other toys on a table together



STEP 2

Ask the kids to select a few toys then have them use the Play-Doh compound to sculpt a habitat or other related items to the toys they selected.



STEP 3

Encourage kids to build out any scene they imagine with minimal explanation or guidance. You'll be amazed to see the kinds of dialogs, stories, and ideas they come up with!

Many kids will intuitively know what to do without instruction, but if they need a little help getting started, that's OK. You can get the ball rolling by making Play-Doh caves or other story-starter props to help spark some ideas. Make sure to let them decide where the adventure goes from there!





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FUN FACTS

Keep the creativity flowing by offering encouragement for open-ended activities, but don't be prescriptive by telling them what to do or make, or critique their work. Instead, encourage "trial and trial" experimentation, as opposed to "trial and error". Remember: when it comes to creative young minds, reality can be suspended, so anything goes!

For example:

Encourage exploration, inspiration, and long-lasting play by saying things like:

- "I wonder what else you will make!"
- "So that tree you made keeps falling down? What else can you try to make it stand up?"

Avoid critiquing or directing play by not saying things like:

- "I think you need a lake for the polar bear to drink from over here."
- "That doesn't really look like a tree."

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THIS ACTIVITY

With your participation and incorporating the "Fun Tips," this activity can give kids opportunities to explore a variety of concepts and work on skills, including:

Creativity

- Apply previous information and experiences to a new context
- Making discoveries and generating new creations

Pretend Play

- Promoting an understanding of fantasy and reality
- Embracing open-ended, "what if" thinking
- Creating those "aha" moments of discovering new ideas and solutions to problems

References

- [16] T Wagner. 2012. Creating Innovators: The Making of Young People Who Will Change the World. New York: Scribner.
- [17] D S Weisberg & A Gopnik. 2013. Pretense, Counterfactuals, and Bayesian Causal Models: Why What Is Not Real Really Matters. Cognitive Science, 37, 1368-1381.
- [18] C Cook et al. 2011. Where Science Starts: Spontaneous Experiments in Preschoolers' Exploratory Play. Cognition, 120, 341-349.