



2 ART AND PLAY

Creativity is an exciting process and the young artist is often less concerned with the final product than with the fun involved on the journey to creating it. The decisions children make as they play, draw, paint, sculpt and write are at the core of the creative process and every young artist's creation is unique.

Art can empower children to experiment and practice various techniques and processes. This often complex process involves making choices, positioning lines, shapes and colours to convey a thought, feeling or event through their imagination, memory, or life experience. Art offers a means of communication, honing fine motor skills, resolving emotional conflict, advancing self-awareness, solving problems, reducing anxiety and increasing self esteem.

Drawing, like talking, is a natural human response, in every culture whether with pen and paper or sticks in the sand – children's images are often based on what they view as important in their environment like people, animals, the home, trees and flowers. Most children draw for the pleasure of it and we can probably remember our own experiences as being pleasurable ones.

Across the world, children's drawing generally follows a developmental sequence. From about 18 months-3 years children make random scribbles and explore materials in a playful and spontaneous way. At around 2-4 years children draw simple people with few features and can show interiors and exteriors at the same time. At around 5-8 years children start to understand the relationship between their art and their world, and use more realistic colour schemes i.e. sky is blue, grass is green. Around age 9-11 years children incorporate more detail into their drawing and want images to be very realistic but can become frustrated if this is not achieved. By age 12-14 years young people can be highly critical of the products they make and are easily discouraged. As children get older, art at this stage is often something that is perused with interest or dropped all together. Natural development will peter out unless a conscious decision is made to continue developing drawing skills. Children's creativity is influenced by many different factors such as culture, expectations of gender, class, adult attitudes and genetic factors.

In addition the very materials children use, the environment in which they create, their personal aptitudes, motivations, talents or interests in art making all influence the process.



“Every child is an artist, the problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.”
Pablo Picasso



Engagement with a children artwork

Children's artwork can be complex, with many different elements and events merging together, therefore simple interpretations are not always possible. By accepting that all children 'see the world in their own unique way' is the most helpful approach and avoids imposing adult values or making assumptions about the content and meaning when viewing children's art work.

Talk about how drawings or artwork are all different from each other. Point out that you can personally like one drawing more than another, without making it a better drawing. Avoid using words that inspire competition- good, bad, better, best. Or words that instil frustration or fear of failure, right, wrong, cheat, mistake, easy, hard.

Encourage creativity by using things that you wouldn't usually paint with. Use different objects instead of paint brushes, and paint on different surfaces such as wall paper, cardboard, fabric, boxes, wood, bark, shells, pebbles.

The colour of the drawing paper can also affect the choice of colours children use to draw with. Black paper is reported to be helpful to children with perceptual or visual impairments. The dark background gives a high contrast, especially if provided with a light coloured drawing medium.



Alternative painting and printing tools

- Cotton reels
- End of cardboard tubes
- Inflated balloons
- Sponges
- Corks
- Scrunchies
- Toy wheels
- Combs
- Bubble wrap
- Corrugated card
- Fabric
- Foam
- Fruit and vegetables
- Finger tips, hands, toes and feet
- Eraser end of pencil
- Cotton buds or balls
- Shaving brush
- House hold brushes
- Plant spray bottle
- Toothbrush
- Straws
- String
- Leaves, twigs or sticks
- Feathers

Did you know ?

Picasso could draw before he could walk, and his first word was the Spanish word for pencil. Also drawing develops hand-eye coordination and spatial awareness abilities that engineers and architects use.

Smart Play Network Members Support

Member you have access to telephone and email support. For more information about the topics covered in this guidance sheet, or any other queries you may have about your project, please contact us using: 0131 554 2620 or admin@smartplaynetwork.org