

## Enhancing your home to encourage play and learning

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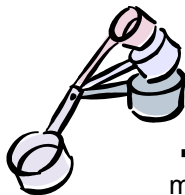
Last month we talked about how parents can build the minds of your child through play. This month's issue will help you discover a wealth of inexpensive materials in your home that can provide educational activities as well as enhance the socio-emotional and physical development of your child.



Young children are very mobile therefore it is essential that you create a safe and secure environment for your child. They are very curious and will touch everything that is interesting to them. You should begin by child-proofing your home to allow him to explore and discover as well as making it the safest possible place to play in. So for the meantime, keep those expensive jars, antiques or any breakable objects or decors. They can be displayed later on when your child is much older. Some other ways to make the environment safe are:

- Electrical outlets must be covered with an outlet cover.
- Wrapped up neatly all those dangling chords with wind-up cord shortener.
- Sharp corners and edges on furniture and cabinets must be covered. There are a lot of furniture edge cushions at any hardware store.
- If possible, the furniture you have must not have glass (i.e., table tops, glass shutters for cabinets). If these are the types you have at home, then you must carefully monitor your child when playing nearby.
- Keep all poisonous stuff away from children's reach and under lock and key.

Now that you have child-proofed your home let us look at those inexpensive things at home you and your child can play and learn with. Before giving these materials to your child, again we caution you to assure for safety such as making sure the material you will use have non-toxic paint, staple wires have been removed, absence of rust, and checking for sharp edges, etc. Here are some of the things you can find in your home.



- Plastic measuring cups – can be used for stacking the biggest cup to smallest one, identifying different sizes, and it can also be used to scoop water or sand which is good for the development of the muscles of the finger
- Measuring spoon – let your child try to fill buckets or cups using the measuring spoon . . . which spoon will fill up the cup faster? The bigger one or the smaller spoon?
- Old pots and pans – can be used as musical instruments, teach your child a rhythm or two by letting him imitate the beat your made. Create different kinds of music by beating fast/slow, hard/soft or using different objects to use as drum sticks.
- Plastic mineral bottles of different sizes – fill these bottles with water and food dye of different colors, create bottles of the same color and have your child match the colors, for the younger children you can create shakers with different things inside (can teach loud/soft sound),
- Younger children enjoy opening and closing things. Provide them with plastic jars or bottles that they can open and close. You can also let your child also put things in and out of jars or try to make shakers out of these by adding rice, beans, uncooked macaroni, or just pebbles (make sure to keep the caps securely on).
- Boxes of cereals, soap and toothpaste are good for reading activities or for craft activities. These boxes are also good for stacking to build a tower, a building or a road.
- Home made Playdough: this is good for developing the fingers of your child. Teach your child to play in a designated area preferably a table with smooth surface if not you might find pieces of play dough stuck in the corner of your



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chair or your favorite furniture.

## HOME MADE PLAYDOUGH

### INGREDIENTS

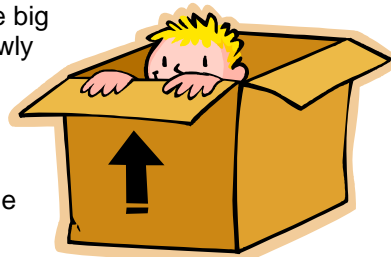
Flour 3cups  
Salt 1 1/2 cups  
Water 3 cups  
Vegetable Oil 2TB.  
Cream of tartar 1TB.  
Food coloring few drops or unsweetened "Kool-Aid" 1pkg.

Mix ALL of the ingredients in a large saucepan. Cook over medium low heat, until the dough comes away from the edges of the pan and it becomes difficult to move the spoon. Remove from heat and cool until it can be handled. Place on counter or wax paper knead 3-4 times. Store the dough in an air tight container. (<http://www.amazingmoms.com/htm/artclayrecipes.htm>)

- Your child loves to dress up and role play so provide him with your old clothes, shoes and other accessories (i.e., necktie, necklace, bags, hats, etc). An old telephone without the cord is a good pretend play material too.
- Children love playing with water.
  - Introduce different sizes of plastic bottles or containers. Teach him fractions by letting him fill up the bottle either half full, ¼ full, and full.
  - Add other materials and let him discover which items will float or sink
  - Place water in a basin with some soap then use your old egg beater to create bubbles.
- For the older children (3 - 6 years), there are a lot of materials that can be used for counting such as plastic bottle caps, big seeds, buttons,
- Empty and cleaned shampoo bottles– let your young child squirt out the paint and make his art work;
- Clean your empty roll-on deodorant containers, add paint of different colors with water – let your child roll out the paint and create beautiful paintings.



- Introduce the calendar particularly the days of the week to your child (3 years or older) – you can point out the date of a relevant event and count the number of days before the event
- Do you have those big boxes from the newly purchased equipment or appliances? Well, these are very good materials for children to play with. They can be a car, an airplane, or a house to your child. Allow your child to play with these boxes and discover the different ways of using it through his play.



These are just some of the materials and activities you can perform with your child. Let your creative juices flow and you will find a lot of junk stuff at home that is useful for your little one. And most especially, allow your child to show you how these materials can be educational for him. Your child will definitely determine other ways of using the material!

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