

Finger Painting with Infants and Toddlers

Painting can seem like one of the “scariest” projects for young children- especially finger painting. But it can be one of the best sensory experiences at any age! Here are some tips to make finger painting a success in your home.

For Young Infants



The best way for the youngest of little artists who have not yet had the opportunity to try solids yet is to place the paint inside a large (gallon-sized is best) Ziploc bag. Tape the sealing side with a heavy-duty tape to prevent leaking and then use masking tape to attach it to the floor. This gives your infant the opportunity to enjoy the process of finger painting in a tummy-time environment without worry.

For Older Infants



If your child is old enough to have had solid foods, it is possible to create finger paints in your home. These paints are completely edible- but might not taste amazing. Finger painting is more process than product at his point, so just enjoying the paint on a high chair tray works best. [You could also try to do a print by placing a paper over your child’s “completed art” and then pulling it back off.] To make clean up easier, put your child either in a bib, smock (Crayola has a long-sleeved one for littles that works well for this age), or just have them paint in a diaper right before bath time!

{Note: If you are concerned about using regular food coloring, there are many natural alternatives available. There are many great sources online that give suggestions.}

Cereal Finger Paint: Mix cereal (rice/oatmeal) and water together until you’ve created a consistency thick/thin as finger paint. Add a small amount of food coloring and mix thoroughly.

Yogurt Finger Paint: Mix yogurt with a small amount of food coloring in small containers.

Cornstarch Finger Paint: Mix 1 cup of cold water with 1 cup of corn starch and mix until dissolved. After boiling 3 cups of water slowly add one cup at a time to your cornstarch/water mix and stir. Then put all of the mix into a saucepan. Heat and stir, until it becomes the consistency of custard. Separate into containers and add food coloring and stir. [Can last in a closed container for 2-3 weeks.]

Toddlers



Here's some tips to make finger painting a successful time for you and your child!

1. If you have the ability, sitting in a chair with straps is great. Then they're not wandering all over the place and painting your whole room. If you can't strap them in, place yourself nearby the area you don't want them to get to until they have clean hands.
2. What to wear? Dress your child in old clothes, old pajamas, or a sized-up "art shirt."
3. *While not necessary, I like to plan my projects right before bath time. Easy clean-up!*
4. Tape is your friend! Use tape- preferably masking/painters' tape- to keep your child's artwork taped down onto the table.
5. If you're concerned about things being a mess, use an old tablecloth on your table or put a shower curtain under your child's chair to protect your floor.
6. Offer them small containers of paint to use- and let them explore the paint in the space given.
7. Have all your extra supplies right nearby, such as paint or paper, so you don't need to leave your child unattended. This includes clean-up materials too (wet facecloth, wipes, etc.). You could even just wrap them up in a towel and bring them right to bath time afterwards!

The cornstarch recipe above is what we usually use at my home- it's much cheaper than buying it from the store!