

# Helping Your Child to Learn and Grow in the Early Years: A Guide for Parents

## Expressive Arts and Design

### What Is Expressive Arts and Design?

Expressive arts and design covers music, art, design and dance. It is divided into two aspects. 'Exploring and using media and materials' focuses on how children use tools, materials and resources to be creative, including such aspects as the techniques they use to paint, how they use construction materials such as bricks, and how they explore the different sounds that musical instruments make. 'Being imaginative' is about how children use their imagination in a variety of ways.

Exploring and Using Media and Materials	Being Imaginative
<b>Early Learning Goal</b> – Children sing songs, make music and dance, and experiment with ways of changing them. They safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function.	<b>Early Learning Goal</b> – Children use what they have learnt about media and materials in original ways, thinking about uses and purposes. They represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings through design and technology, art, music, dance, role play and stories.
Give your child different tools to use when they are painting. Brushes, blunt knives, twigs, leaves, cut fruit and vegetables, fingers, hands, toes and feet are all great for creating different effects. Try mixing glitter or sand in with the paint and see what happens. Explore what happens when we mix colours, and when we mix white or black in with a colour.	Children use their imaginations in different ways and at different times, but their imaginative play will be based on what they already know. You can stimulate your child's imagination by telling and retelling stories and then encouraging your child to act out the stories using their toys, construction kits and so on.
If you can stand it(!), challenge your child to make a set of musical instruments using only what they can find in the kitchen (under your supervision, of course). Wooden spoons on pans, whisks in cups, rice in a cup or yoghurt pot – all make great instruments. Discuss the difference in the sounds and encourage your child to use interesting words to describe them. Explore how we make loud and soft sounds, high and low sounds. Tap out a rhythm and ask your child to copy it, then swap.	Let your child sing and dance – put on a favourite piece of music and sing along. Can your child make up a dance to go with the music? Lose your inhibitions and dance along too! Talk about how different music makes us want to move in different ways. When sharing a story, think about music that would go well with it, such as twinkly music for a fairy or stomping music for a dinosaur.
Junk modelling is a great way of teaching children to plan a design, choose materials, think about ways of joining them, and adapt their plans if things go wrong. Ask your child to build you a model of something that interests them at that time –it could be a train, a dinosaur, a castle or anything else. They will be using 'junk' – in other words, cardboard boxes, packets, cardboard tubes, plastic trays and anything else in your recycling bin. Ask them to draw a picture of what they want their model to look like and think about how they will join everything together. When your child has made their model, ask them whether it turned out how they wanted it to, and if not, why not?	Encourage your child to role play situations they have observed in real life. Setting up a pretend shop, restaurant, hairdressers, workshop or classroom are all simply done with items you can find at home. Join in and play along with your child.