

Best Practice and Activity Ideas for the EYFS Expressive Arts and Design

The suggestions for this area of learning should be read alongside the following:

- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE 2014)
- Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Early Education 2012)
- Teaching and Play in the Early Years - a balancing act? (Ofsted 2015)

The ideas are intended to support learning and development for children in receipt of funding for the Early Years Free Entitlement for three and four year olds.

How children learn: the Characteristics of Effective Learning

Teaching and learning in the EYFS must be informed by these characteristics:

playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'

active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements

creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

The suggested ideas should be integrated into a cycle of observation, assessment and planning where children's needs and interests are central to planning and provision.

Please note that the Early Learning Goals define the level of progress expected for children at the end of the EYFS, at the end of the Reception year.



Expressive Arts and Design is one of the four specific areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The specific areas include essential skills and knowledge. They grow out of the prime areas and provide important contexts for learning.

By encouraging children to experiment and use learned skills to explore a wide range of media and materials we are promoting their ability to explore and understand their world and to make links between their experiences which will encompass all the areas of learning.

These experiences can also be expressed via music making, singing, dance, role-play and storytelling.



Within this area of learning children are also being supported to

- Develop their imaginations so they can express their ideas in a variety of individual ways, supported by adults within a stimulating learning environment
- Develop independent learning, with time and space given to allow for learning in depth

This area of learning is divided into two aspects:

- 1. Exploring and using media and materials**
- 2. Being imaginative**

Clearly these two aspects overlap and feed into each other. Practitioners should provide first-hand experiences for children to explore with all of their senses. These should capture children's imagination and excite them into action.

Clear expectations are provided in the EYFS guidelines of the possible stages of development, the ways in which adults can positively support the children and the way in which the learning environment will provide a wealth of exciting possibilities.

Each aspect has an Early Learning Goal which children work towards from birth-five.

1. Early Learning Goal for Exploring and Using Media and Materials

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.

2. Early Learning Goal for Being Imaginative.

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.

Positive relationships: The role of the adult

- to monitor all children's progress and ensure appropriate intervention and provide additional support where needed
- to provide a stimulating learning environment, including manufactured objects and the natural world, which inspires children's creativity
- to provide opportunities for children to develop their own ideas and make choices about materials
- to value children's ideas
- to talk to children about their work, introducing appropriate vocabulary
- to enable children to reflect on their work through discussion
- when appropriate, to teach skills and techniques which allow children to work independently such as paint mixing, sticking, cutting and how to use tools



- to support children in how to choose appropriate materials for intended creations and how to select appropriate tools for different kinds of media and representation.
- to talk to children about artists, past and present, and how they express their ideas
- to enable children to develop a vocabulary to describe their work and that of other artists, and emphasise that all cultures have different ways of expressing themselves through art forms
- to provide experiences/stimuli that capture children's imagination and excite them into action
- to provide opportunities for children to represent experiences through movement and dance, including spontaneous movement
- to plan specific movement ideas from a range of stimuli
- to be involved with children's dance and movement when appropriate
- to provide opportunities for children to make music
- to provide opportunities for children to listen and respond to music and sound
- to join in with children's musical activities and to value children's music making
- to teach children to use tools safely

- to teach techniques for joining things together, for example, gluing, using tapes, string, staples, treasury tags, butterfly clips
- to teach techniques for separating things, for example, cutting, tearing, punching holes
- to teach techniques for working with malleable materials, for example, moulding, pinching, flattening, rolling, squeezing
- to join in sensitively with children's imaginative play
- to model the pretending process, supporting children's understanding of the ways in which one object can be used to represent another
- to promote links in children's learning, for example, making props for role play using recycled materials
- to make links between role play areas and the local and wider community responding to the experiences and interests of the children
- to promote equal opportunities within role play and imaginative play
- to read and tell a wide range of traditional and other stories, emphasising simple story structures and story language.

The Learning Environment must support both aspects of this area of learning.

The learning environment includes indoor and outdoor provision. Child initiated play will be enhanced by adult support **when appropriate** to support and extend children's learning.



Provide

- a mark-making area which includes as appropriate

a range of materials, for example, paints, pencils, chalks, pastels, charcoal

- a range of implements, for example, brushes, sponges, feathers, fingers
- papers of different textures, shapes, sizes, colours,
- other surfaces for mark making, for example, chalk boards, whiteboards, easels, large surfaces
- drawing and painting activities using I.C.T.
- a range of pictures and books showing a variety of artistic styles and ways of representation, including different cultural contexts



- a designing and making area to include:
 - a wide range of materials, for example, fabrics, reclaimed materials, boxes, tubes, plastic cartons, bottle tops etc), card, paper
 - separating and joining tools, for example, scissors, tape, string, glue
 - malleable materials
 - a variety of materials with and without tools in order for children to understand their properties, for example, playdough, clay, and plasticine
 - opportunities to construct and design using materials without tools, for example, by squeezing, pressing, pulling, rolling, pinching, poking, stretching, tearing, moulding, etc.
 - opportunities to construct and design using materials with tools, for example, by cutting, shaping, combing, grating, indenting, making patterns, holes, etc.
 - a range of tools so children can make choices about what to use

- a wide range of construction sets
- a carefully organised wooden block area
- books and pictures which show a range of three dimensional work from a variety of cultural backgrounds first-hand, stimulating experiences, as above
- resources to stimulate spontaneous movement, for example, fabrics, streamers, scarves, feathers, ribbons
- clothes or costumes that suggest a character and specific movement response, for example, bear, scarecrow
- an appropriate space for movement
- paintings, reproductions and originals if possible
- collections of themed artefacts , for example, boxes and lids, old teddybears
- dressing up clothes, shoes, hats, bags
- resources and props to stimulate narrative role play, for example, 'explorers kit' with backpack, map, torch, food
- resources and props to stimulate symbolic play,, for example, boxes, blocks, fabrics
- small world play to include:
 - sand and water play, sometimes combined with small world activities to create imaginary landscapes, for example, making underwater scene and islands

- books, posters and resources reflecting and respecting cultural diversity and presenting non-stereotyped images throughout the setting
- Opportunities to develop IT skills via software but also 'real life' experiences with the computer.
- a rich, stimulating environment that invites children to explore, using their senses
- resources freely available for children to use independently
- time for this to happen
- space for this to happen

Where possible there should be:

- provision for children to label or write their name on their work independently
- provision for children to display their work
- provision for children to keep work in order to return to it the next day



Possible activities

The following examples give some ideas for experiences and activities to explore media and materials

- adult-led stories and rhymes-introduced in a range of ways, including traditional stories, told stories made up by the adult
- listening to and creating a diversity of music
- experimenting with sounds, for example, using percussion instruments or home-made instruments, natural sounds, sounds for a purpose such as for stories
- carefully observing and drawing natural objects and materials , for example, feathers, shells, leaves, ice, 'minibeasts', plants and seeds
- as above with manufactured objects and materials , for example, balloons, ribbons, scarves, fabric, bubbles, plastics, steel.
- lead opportunities for children to move in a variety of ways , for example, roll, slide, swing
- give opportunities to experience real weather conditions , for example, the wind and the snow!

- performances , for example, visiting dancers, puppet theatre
- visits, for example, to the park, to a farm
- using and mixing colours and responding to music: invite children to apply vivid colours to paper, fabric or wood using powder paint, ready mixed paint, inks, or 'brusho'. Encourage them to observe what happens to colours as they mix. Play music whilst children paint.



- large-scale mark-making: using large brushes and rollers, invite children to paint with water outdoor
- 'paper engineering': twist, fold, tear and join paper and card to create imaginary landscapes.
- printing: using fingers, shells, construction bricks and other materials, invite children to make impressions into playdough or clay. Encourage children to look for patterns as they print and to explore texture.

Possible activities to explore being imaginative

The following examples give some ideas for experiences and activities to support this aspect.



- sing well-known songs, using children's ideas to change the words and devise actions
- explore body sounds by clapping, stamping, clicking, rubbing, use instruments to make unusual sounds by tapping, scraping, shaking
- match sounds to events and characters in stories, composing a simple sound sequence
- dance activities starting from first hand experience, e.g thinking about: autumn leaves, seasons, water, ice, bubbles:

Start with inviting children to explore the resources at first hand. What do they look like and feel like?

- with adult guidance, children make starting shapes. Movements can then be devised as a response to leaves falling, ice melting or bubbles growing and floating.
- the dance may be accompanied by spoken words or percussion.
- children can finish the dance with a final shape or at a set signal, for example, woodblock accompaniment for 'pop'.
- more able children can think about contrasting movements, for example, ice melting and freezing, bubbles floating and popping.

Read and tell stories adapted to include the children, their families and community members, for example, 'Joanna and the beanstalk'

- work with children to develop an imaginary landscape for a fictional character in the sand tray
- lead a 'treasure hunt' walk around the setting, incorporating children's ideas
- create imaginary homes and dens outdoors using boxes and blankets
- invite children's theatre groups to the setting and encourage children to devise, tell and act their own stories
- invite children to draw, paint or make collage impressions of spirals after observing snails
- encourage children's interpretation of music through dancing and movement, introducing fabrics, scarves and streamers - develop a sequence of movements as suggested by contrasting music
- stimulate children's storytelling through the use of props, such as a picnic basket with tablecloth, napkins, food and a flask – children may record their ideas

**Useful links**

www.jabadao.org

www.samesky.co.uk

www.earlyarts.co.uk

www.kidsinbrighton.co.uk

www.childfriendlybrighton.co.uk

www.ncb.org.uk

Useful books

Bruce, T (2001) *Cultivating creativity in Babies, Toddlers and Young Children*. Hodder Education

Griffiths, F (2009) *Supporting children's creativity through music, dance, drama and art*. Routledge

Skinner, S (2007) *Creative activities in the early years*. Sage Publications Ltd

Duffy, B (2006) *Supporting Creativity and Imagination in the Early Years*. Open University Press