

Tips for Creating Art Projects with Your Two- to Three-Year-Old



Art can nurture creativity, thinking skills, self-esteem, and self-awareness. When offered opportunities to express themselves and discover their feelings through art, children will develop values that will guide them for a lifetime.

Here are some tips for planning art projects with your preschooler:

1. Always allow for choices.
2. Allow your child to start over if he is not satisfied with his work.
3. Encourage independence.
4. Allow time.
5. Focus on the process and not the product.

Here are 10 tips on conversational interactions with your child while he or she is producing art:

1. Do ask your child to tell you about her work, rather than saying “What is this supposed to be?” or calling the work scribbles.
2. Do ask, “What do you like best about your work?”
3. Do respect his work and ask for permission before adding his name or writing on it.
4. Do not set up a competitive atmosphere by praising one child’s art abilities over another child’s.
5. Do allow your child to explore mediums, rather than use an adult’s artwork as a model.
6. Do notice things about his work, such as “I see you used blues and greens in your work. Those are two cool colors.”
7. Do be enthusiastic about the processes she uses when creating her work, such as “Do you see how you made the colors on your paper swirl together?”

8. Do let your child choose the types of materials and tools he will use.
9. Do turn a child’s question around if she asks you if you like her work. Ask her how she feels about what she has accomplished. She should be seeking to please herself with her work rather than someone else.
10. Do show examples of fine art you find in books at your library or online, and add vocabulary specific to the arts when talking about them.

Sample Art Experiences for Two- and Three-Year-Olds

Note: Be sure to cover surfaces you don’t want “decorated.” Vinyl tablecloths work well as reusable cover-ups.

- Add food coloring to bubbles and encourage your child to blow the bubbles onto white paper to create bubble art.
- Cut animals and shapes out of sponges and let your child make sponge prints.
- Finger paint with paint or with edible ingredients, such as pudding or yogurt.
- Paint with different objects, such as feathers, pine branches, or small sponges held with a clothespin.
- Place gelatin in a re-sealable bag for your child to squish.
- Provide paper, large crayons, and nontoxic markers with a large point for art work.
- Provide chunky chalk for your child to use on a sidewalk.
- Provide play dough or modeling clay. (Many simple homemade recipes are available online.)

Tips for Creating Art Projects

- Provide eye droppers and water colored with food coloring. Encourage children to drop the water onto coffee filters for simple color mixing.
- Encourage children to make simple rubbings. Tape a piece of paper to a table; place objects such as leaves on top of the paper; place another piece of paper on top of the objects and secure it with tape. Your child can then use crayons or chalk to make rubbings.
- Provide different colored sheets of tissue paper; invite your child to tear small pieces of her choice and attach them to contact paper.
- Give your child a large piece of sandpaper and various colors of yarn cut into small pieces. Have him create a design by “drawing” on the sandpaper with the yarn.
- Provide rubber stamps and invite children to create a design on construction paper. Laminate if desired.

Remember: It's the process not the product that's important!