

**What does your early childhood classroom say to children?** How can you invite young children to explore the visual arts? Interesting textures, sights, smells, and sounds—arranged and presented in aesthetically pleasing ways—encourage children to be curious, creative thinkers who reflect on their explorations.

In this brief guide from Binney & Smith, the makers of Crayola® arts and crafts supplies, you'll find suggestions to help you select high-quality, safe art materials and arrange creative spaces that enhance children's learning.



## Arrange Spaces Imaginatively

### **Inspire children's creativity with an environment that encourages them to learn through the arts!**

These are some of the most important things to keep in mind when you set up an art center, creative studio, or other media area that builds connections with the rest of the curriculum.

### **Establish an aesthetic environment!**

If possible, find a spot for the art area near windows so children have ample light. Regularly create eye-level displays of fine art, sculpture, and cultural artifacts as well as natural items, so that children can be inspired by beauty all around them. Choose children's books that have pleasing illustrations. Highlight links with the curriculum. If you're exploring circles, consider tires on vehicles, sports balls, color wheels, and the moon!



### **Demonstrate basics.**

Children quickly learn how to safely use (and take care of) paint brushes, rollers, markers, and other art tools and materials. Before introducing a tool, medium, or process, point out how children are expected to use, clean, and store their materials. Show basic steps in the process.

### **Involve children.**

Enlist their help for daily set-up. They can fill water containers, mix paints, and check for empty glue bottles. When children feel responsible for their learning environment, they are far more likely to take good care of it.

### **Encourage success.**



Arrange materials on low, open, labeled shelves so children can select, and return, their art supplies and tools. Place loose items in clear, labeled containers, so children can both see what is inside and begin to recognize the word. Group similar art tools together. Provide trays for children to carry their glue, scissors, paper, and other materials to a nearby table.

### **Reduce mess!**

Choose a washable floor covering. Children often like to create while standing up, so find easels with trays and set up tables that are washable. Install a sink nearby for convenience. Keep sponges, paper towels, and waste-baskets handy for easy cleanup. Hang easy-to-put-on paint smocks near easels.



### **Plan construction, drying, and exhibit space.**

Space is essential for children to build large structures, such as converting a cardboard refrigerator box into a subway train. Find flat, airy storage racks for work to air-dry. Display children's creations so that families, other children, and staff can admire their creativity. Keep extra supplies on organized shelves that make it easy to restock—and post a list so supplies can be ordered before they're all gone!

*Art is imagination  
expressed through the senses.*

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Althouse, R., Johnson, M.H., and Mitchell, S.T. (2003). *The Colors of Learning: Integrating the Visual Arts Into the Early Childhood Curriculum*. New York: Teachers College Press and Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
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- Pinciotti, P., with D. Berry, C. Sterman, & R.L. Gorton. (2001). *Art as a Way of Learning: Explorations in Teaching*. Easton, PA: Binney & Smith Inc. and Bethlehem, PA: Northampton Community College.
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For more ideas, techniques,  
and information, visit  
[www.crayola.com/education](http://www.crayola.com/education)

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## Creative Spaces to Inspire Learning

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## Children engaged in the arts ...

- build on their own life experiences
- develop creative, critical thinking skills
- express ideas imaginatively
- appreciate their heritage and diverse cultures
- explore materials and processes
- construct meaningful knowledge
- understand concepts kinesthetically
- communicate with broader vocabularies
- interact constructively with others
- integrate their understandings
- record what they are learning
- reflect on the creative process



## Basic Art Materials for a Group of Young Children

### Papers

- construction, drawing, manila, newsprint, oak tag, and other plain papers

### Construction and Collage Materials

- decorative materials (pompoms, fabric)
- hole punch
- modeling compounds
- natural items (safe leaves, pine cones)
- recycled materials (cardboard boxes)
- ruler
- scissors: straight and decorative edges
- string, yarn, and/or ribbon
- tape: masking and clear

### Drawing Tools

- chalk
- computer
- crayons in a range of colors
- markers, thick and thin
- oil pastels
- pencils: graphite, colored, watercolor

### Painting Supplies

- brushes: wide and narrow, round and flat
- easels
- nonspill paint cups
- painting shirts
- washable fingerpaint
- washable paint
- washable watercolors (large pans)

Adapted from *Art as a Way of Learning™: Explorations in Teaching*, p. 158.



# Choose Materials That Invite Exploration

**Squishy, squeaky modeling compound. Slippery, spready paint. Bumpy, crumple paper. Learning through the arts is definitely hands-on and head-on!** Count on your own imagination along with these tips to equip a classroom where children are eager to explore media!

### Select good tools.

Just as chefs rely on sturdy cookware, so do artists need tools that perform properly. Look for paint brushes whose bristles are flexible and firmly anchored to a handle that's easy for small hands to hold. Find both flat and round brushes for greater control of the paint. Choose paper that holds up when it's wet or when young hands energetically move a crayon round and round.

### Recycle clean, safe stuff.

Ask families to collect materials such as fabric, yarn, sponges, margarine tubs, foam produce trays, paper towel and gift wrap rolls, magazines, cardboard boxes, wrapping paper, milk cartons, and index cards. Children can decorate recycled shirts with washable markers for messy projects—when the shirts get soiled, just launder and design again!

### Pick paper, wood, and plastic.

Grocery and lunch bags make great puppets, dress-up clothes, take-home containers, and so much more. Plastic drinking straws are great for blowing bubbles and building constructions. Straws and water bottles are perfect armatures for clay sculptures. Offer both clear and masking tapes. Choose craft sticks, plastic dinnerware, sponges, and small rolling pins.

### Buy high-quality media.

Children experiment with color, so choose paints, markers, and crayons whose colors mix true. Paints that are opaque, washable, and stick to paper when dry are more likely to satisfy young artists. Crayons that children prefer have brilliant colors, rarely break, and go on the paper smoothly without making messy "crumbs." Markers with durable tips and more truly washable color last longer. Look for safe, ventilated caps. When buying colored pencils, make sure they are the size, shape, and durability suitable for children's ages and maturing grasps.

### Embellish with a flourish!

Craft feathers (be alert to allergies), chenille sticks, wiggly eyes, finds from nature (sea shells, twigs), glitter glue, ribbon, foil—children's imaginations are sparked by a variety of appealing materials.



## Especially for Young Children, Only From Crayola®

Kid's First® Washable Crayons, Paints, and Conical Tip Markers

Large and Anti-Roll Crayons

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So Big® Crayons, Brushes, and Washable Watercolors

Write Start® Colored Pencils



## Safety First!

**Poisoning is one of the most important concerns in selecting art supplies**, particularly when working with young children who put everything into their mouths. Use only non-toxic art supplies that carry the AP or CP seal. They are safe for children, even if ingested.



Conforms to  
ASTM D 4236

Although national standards require labeling of potential choking hazards for children younger than age 3, educators know there is no magical age when children stop putting small objects in their mouths. Responsible manufacturers reconfigure small parts (such as marker caps) to a safer size.

Adapted from *Art as a Way of Learning™: Explorations in Teaching*, p. 158.