

EYFS Expressive Art and Design – Creating with materials

Birth - 12months

- Explores a range of sensory experiences using touch, sound, and movement.
- Experiments with materials through whole-body movement – banging, grasping, and mouthing objects.
- Notices and is attracted to strong contrasts and patterns, especially those resembling a human face.
- Begins to make marks intentionally, using fingers or objects to create movement

How adults/environment can facilitate development:

Adults:

- Encourage and repeat babies' sounds and actions to build connection and curiosity.
- Model simple cause-and-effect play (e.g. shaking a rattle, banging a drum).

Environment:

- High-contrast and patterned visuals, including faces and simple shapes.
- Opportunities for whole-body exploration – soft surfaces, mirrors, and low-level resources.
- Calm lighting and gentle music for multi-sensory engagement.

12-18 months

- Continues to explore and experiment with a wider range of media and tools – e.g. paint, water, dough, instruments.
- Moves to sounds and music through body movement, clapping, or tapping.
- Begins to copy simple actions or gestures, such as waving or banging to rhythm.
- Starts to show control and preference in mark-making – choosing tools and making deliberate movements.

How adults/environment can facilitate development:

Adults:

- Introduce new descriptive language for sensory experiences (e.g. *loud, quiet, smooth, bumpy*).
- Join in with children's rhythms, actions, and music-making.
- Acknowledge and celebrate early creativity, showing genuine interest in what the child is doing

Environment:

- A mix of sensory materials such as water, dough, paint, sand, and natural objects.
- Simple musical instruments and objects that make contrasting sounds.

18-24 months

- Uses media and materials with increasing purpose and control - exploring textures, colours, and sounds.
- Sings or vocalises while playing with instruments or sound makers.
- Begins to use one object to represent another in pretend play (e.g. a block as a phone).
- Shows curiosity about the effects of actions on materials and resources (e.g. what happens when mixing, tapping, or pressing).

How adults/environment can facilitate development:

Adults:

- Model and describe the effects of actions on materials (e.g. *You pressed it and it made a mark!*).
- Support pretend play where one object represents another (e.g. using a block as a phone).
- Talk with children about their creations, building vocabulary and confidence.

Environment:

- Varied open-ended materials for combining, building, and transforming (e.g. blocks, fabrics, dough).
- Opportunities for exploring rhythm and pattern through music, movement, and mark-making.
- Accessible creative spaces indoors and out, allowing freedom to experiment independently.

2-3 years

Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Joins in with singing simple songs and rhymes. Explores paint using fingers and other parts of the body, enjoying the texture and movement. Begins to use brushes and tools to make marks.	Creates sounds by rubbing, shaking, tapping, or striking objects. Explores colour through mixing and combining. Begins to experiment with making simple rhythms or sound patterns.	Explores different materials using all their senses – sand, dough, fabric, paper, and natural objects. Experiments with ways to enclose space or create shapes with blocks and loose parts.	Manipulates and plays with materials – rolling, pressing, and shaping. Begins to use 3D and 2D structures to explore and express simple ideas.	Uses imagination to decide what to do with different materials and sound makers. Talks about their creations using simple descriptive language (e.g. loud/quiet, fast/slow).	Expresses ideas and feelings through mark-making, music, and model-making. Begins to give meaning to their work, saying what it represents or how it makes them feel.

How adults/environment can facilitate development:

Adults:

- Encourage children to listen to music, watch dance, and respond through movement and expression.
- Support children's fascination with patterns, textures, and repeated actions using tools and materials.
- Model and celebrate creativity
- Be sensitive and responsive to children's individual ways of expressing ideas – through drawing, movement, or sound.
- Talk about feelings and ideas that arise through art, music, and dance experiences.

Environment:

- Opportunities to see and experience live or recorded performances – musicians, dancers, storytellers.
- A rich range of visual and cultural art forms, artefacts, and images to inspire creativity and curiosity.
- Regular opportunities to revisit familiar materials, tools, and experiences to deepen understanding of texture, form, and composition.

3-4 Years

Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Join and combine different materials, exploring a range of textures (smooth, bumpy, rough, soft). Use simple tools and materials with support, beginning to join pieces together.	Explore how materials can be changed or combined for different effects. Create closed shapes with continuous lines and begin to use these shapes to represent familiar objects.	Draw with increasing control and detail – representing faces with circles and adding features (eyes, mouth, hair). Continue exploring how sounds, colours, and materials can be changed.	Develop their own creative ideas and begin to select materials or tools to express them. Use lines to enclose a space and represent actions or experiences through drawing and model-making.	Explore colour mixing freely and begin to discuss how colours can change. Use tools and construction pieces for specific purposes – stacking, joining, and balancing.	Freely choose and experiment with a wide range of materials, tools, and techniques to bring imaginative ideas to life. Plan and adapt their creations as they work, showing independence and growing creative confidence.

How adults/environment can facilitate development:

Adults:

- Support children's talk by introducing vocabulary linked to art and design (e.g. *mix, shade, hue, texture, shape*).
- Encourage children to notice and describe changes in materials, sound, and movement – exploring cause and effect.
- Model new techniques or skills based on children's interests (e.g. mixing colours, joining materials, using tools safely).
- Provide encouragement when children have a clear idea or intention, supporting them to plan and problem-solve.

Environment:

- A range of open-ended materials for mixing, joining, building, and transforming.
- Clearly defined creative spaces where ongoing projects can be stored and revisited.
- Displays or examples of artists', sculptors', and musicians' work to inspire ideas.
- Access to varied music, painting, sculpture, and movement experiences.
- Musical instruments and tools to explore sound, rhythm, and technique.
- Opportunities for children to test ideas and express them through multiple media (2D, 3D, sound, movement).

4-5 Years - Year R

Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Work collaboratively with peers, sharing ideas and	Create collaboratively,	Explore, use and refine a variety of artistic	Experiment with artistic techniques and refine	Develop individual ideas using diverse	Express complex ideas and emotions through a range

exploring a range of tools and materials. Begin to discuss what they are creating and why.	sharing ideas, resources and skills to plan and make group projects. Begin to adapt work in response to others' ideas. <i>Link to Great Exhibition.</i>	effects to express ideas and feelings - through painting, collage, sculpture, movement, and music.	skills - blending colours, layering textures, and exploring light, projection, and shadow.	materials (paint, fabric, natural resources, digital tools). Express and communicate discoveries, thoughts, and feelings through art, music, and movement.	of art forms - combining dance, drama, music, and visual arts. Plan and talk about their creative processes, showing increasing independence and confidence.
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How adults/environment can facilitate development:

Adults:

- Encourage children to talk about their creative choices and use of materials, tools, and techniques.
- Support experimentation with colour, design, texture, form, and function.
- Use small group or whole-class discussions to help children explain their work and ideas.
- Highlight how drawing and mark-making link to both play and early writing as key forms of expression.

Environment:

- A range of familiar and creative materials (e.g. paint, paper, clay, card, drawing media).
- Joining materials such as tape, glue, string, split pins, or treasury tags for both 2D and 3D work.
- Open-ended props and resources that can be transformed through imaginative play.

Spaces where children can store, revisit, and refine ongoing creative projects.

Artist studies:

Children will explore, use and refine a variety of artistic effects to express their ideas and feelings. Children will be able to recognise the work of famous artists and take inspiration from their work. Children will be able to express how they feel about the work of the artist they are studying. Children will work to create collaboratively, sharing ideas, resources and skills, as well as independently. Children will learn the skill of returning to and building on their work, refining ideas and developing their ability to represent them.

Intended Artists, Vocabulary, Implementation

					
<p>Jackson Pollock (Collaborative work) Jackson Pollock, abstract, colour, work, drink, together, collaborate, splatter, flick. Exploration of Jackson Pollock through texts, videos, discussions and teacher demonstrations, children to recreate their artwork.</p> 	<p>Wassily Kandinsky, Andy Goldsworthy (example above) primary colours, bold, squares, rectangles, thick lines, thin lines, shapes, circles, nature, leaves, sand, ice, stone. Exploration of Wassily Kandinsky through texts, videos, discussions and teacher demonstrations, children to recreate their artwork get outside to recreate work of Andy Goldsworthy take photos</p>	<p>Yayoi Kusama Piet Mondrian, Shapes, drawing, squiggles, thin lines, pen, pencils, colours, doodles, symbols. Exploration through texts, videos, discussions and teacher demonstrations, children to recreate their artwork using a variety of 2d and 3d.</p> 	<p>Eric Carle, Joan Miro tissue paper, colours, caterpillar, animals, minibeasts, Shapes, drawing, squiggles, thin lines, pen, pencils, colours, doodles, symbols. Exploration of Joan Miro and Eric Carle through texts, videos, discussions and teacher demonstrations, children to recreate their artwork.</p> 	<p>Vincent van Gogh, Alma Thomas Sunflowers, museum, Dutch, oil painting, Starry night, yellow, observational, soft, muted, background. Begin by exploring colour mixing to create art in the style of Alma Thomas. Exploration of Vincent van Gogh through texts, videos, discussions and teacher demonstrations, children to recreate their artwork.</p>  	<p>Georgia O'Keeffe, Henri Matisse Flowers, copy, colours, observe, shape, bright, bold, realistic, unusual, still life, French, American, paper collage, scissors. Exploration of Georgia O'Keeffe and Henri Matisse through texts, videos, discussions and teacher demonstrations, children to recreate their artwork.</p> 

ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function.
- Share their creations, explaining the process they have used.
- Make use of props and materials when role playing characters in narratives and stories.

EYFS - Expressive Art and Design - Being Imaginative and Expressive

Birth - 12months

- Shows attention to sounds and music, turning towards familiar voices or rhythms.
- Responds physically and emotionally to sounds, movement, and voices.
- Moves or bounces rhythmically when hearing music or familiar songs.
- Begins to explore their voice – cooing, babbling, or experimenting with pitch and tone.
- Anticipates repeated phrases or actions in simple songs and rhymes (e.g. “Peepo”).

How adults/environment can facilitate development:

Adults:

- Gently introduce babies to music, songs, and rhymes through voice, touch, and movement.
- Respond warmly to babies’ vocalisations and mirror their sounds, encouraging turn-taking and early communication.
- Use facial expression and exaggerated tone to engage attention during songs or games like “Peepo”.
- Observe and respond to how babies react to different sounds, adapting experiences to match their interest and comfort levels.

Environment:

- A calm space with opportunities for sound and movement exploration.
- Soft musical toys, rattles, bells, and shakers that make gentle and varied sounds.
- Access to adult-led singing and music sessions with repetitive, rhythmic songs.
- Opportunities to hear live and recorded music with contrasting tempos and tones.
- Visuals linked to sound and movement – e.g. mirrors

12-18 months

- Expresses self through physical actions, sounds, and movement.
- Joins in with familiar songs and rhymes through gesture or simple vocalisation.
- Explores instruments and everyday objects that make sounds – shaking, banging, tapping.
- Begins to move in response to rhythm and beat, enjoying dancing or swaying to music.
- Uses their voice to experiment with volume, tone, and rhythm.

How adults/environment can facilitate development:

Adults:

- Encourage children to explore sound-making with their voices and a range of objects or instruments.
- Join in with children’s movements, dancing, and gestures to model rhythm and pattern.
- Introduce familiar rhymes and songs with repeated actions, inviting children to anticipate what comes next.
- Celebrate children’s spontaneous sound-making, clapping, and dancing as forms of self-expression.

<p>Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of sound-making resources such as drums, shakers, wooden spoons, and metal bowls. • Familiar props linked to songs (e.g. soft toys, puppets). • Music and movement activities built into daily routines (e.g. tidy-up songs, welcome songs). • Opportunities for free exploration of sounds – e.g. banging, tapping, and shaking everyday objects. 					
18-24 months					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates sound effects and simple rhythmic patterns (e.g. mimicking animal sounds or vehicles). • Begins to use one object to represent another in pretend play (e.g. a block as a phone). • Moves confidently to music, responding to changes in tempo or tone. • Combines movement, sound, and imagination to express feelings or recreate experiences. • Joins in with repetitive refrains or key phrases in familiar songs and rhymes. 					
How adults/environment can facilitate development:					
<p>Adults:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show genuine interest and join in with children's early pretend play, following their lead (e.g. pretending to drink from a toy cup or feed a doll). • Model simple imaginative actions to extend play ideas (e.g. "Shall we stir the soup?"). • Respond positively to children's ideas and narrate what they are doing to build language and confidence. • Encourage the use of sounds, movement, and gestures to represent experiences and stories. • Celebrate attempts to combine imagination with movement, music, or role play. <p>Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiar, real-life items and open-ended resources for imaginative play (e.g. real kitchen utensils, sponges, fabric, baskets, spoons). • Props that inspire pretend scenarios such as cups, telephones, dolls, or vehicles. • Space where role play can evolve naturally – cosy corners, dens, • Access to music, movement, and sound-making materials to enrich imaginative experiences. 					
2-3 years					
Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Explore a range of sound makers and instruments, playing them in different ways (tapping, shaking, scraping). Respond physically and	Begin to move rhythmically to music – swaying, bouncing, or clapping in time. Experiment with everyday materials to	Join in with familiar songs and rhymes, making some sounds or actions to match the rhythm. Begin to create rhythmic and repetitive sounds independently.	Explore how sounds and movements can represent feelings or ideas (e.g. loud for happy, quiet for sleepy). Begin to pretend	Take part in simple action songs (e.g. <i>Twinkle Twinkle</i>) and respond imaginatively through movement, gestures, or facial expression.	Enjoy performing songs, sounds, or dances to others. Use sound, words, and movement creatively to represent ideas, stories, or emotions.

emotionally to changes in music, such as fast or slow tempos.	make and explore different sounds.		through sound and movement.		
How adults/environment can facilitate development:					
<p>Adult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe and sometimes take part in children's make-believe play in order to gain an understanding of their interests. Observe and reflect on the children's own explorations and creations. <p>Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer a variety of stimulating resources that can be used in different ways both inside and outside, e.g. fabric, boxes, sound makers, water, string bags and planks. Create time and space for children to develop their own creations, e.g. photographs, sounds, movement, constructions, stories, collages. 					
3-4 Years					
Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Take part in simple pretend play, using an object to represent something else (e.g. a block as a phone). Begin to show different emotions in drawings, such as happiness.	Listen with increased attention to sound and begin to identify simple differences in pitch or tempo. Play instruments with growing control to express feelings and ideas.	Begin to develop more complex stories using small-world equipment (e.g. creating homes, farms, or adventures). Remember and sing entire songs from memory.	Show different emotions in drawings and paintings such as happiness and sadness. Create their own songs or improvise new versions of familiar tunes.	Respond to what they have heard, expressing ideas and feelings through movement or drawing. Sing the pitch of a tone sung by another person (pitch match).	Sing the melodic shape of familiar songs (up and down). Use drawings to represent ideas such as movement or loud sounds. Make imaginative and complex constructions using small-world resources (e.g. towns, vehicles, landscapes).
How adults/environment can facilitate development:					
<p>Adults:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure children have opportunities to experience the world outside the setting, e.g. through walks, visits, visitors, and links with children's homes. Share a diverse range of text, image-based, and oral stories to stimulate imaginative responses. Create spaces for children to respond to stories and represent their ideas of what they hear, imagine, and enjoy through a variety of art forms and materials. Co-create stories with children based on their ideas, experiences, and the people and places they know well or imaginary ones. <p>Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer children a wide variety of materials and resources, both inside and outside, that stimulate their imagination to build, become, represent, and experiment through imaginative play and thinking. 					

4-5 Years - Year R					
Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Sing in a group or alone, increasingly matching pitch and following melody. Explore a range of instruments and movement patterns in response to music.	Develop storylines in pretend play, introducing characters, settings, and simple plots. Explore and engage in music-making and dance, performing solo or in groups.	Return to and build on previous creative experiences, refining ideas and representations through art, music, and movement.	Listen attentively, move to, and talk about music – expressing feelings and responses through gesture, sound, or art. Watch and talk about dance and performance art, expressing what they notice and feel.	Use combinations of art forms (e.g. music, dance, dramatic play, drawing, construction) to represent imaginative ideas and emotions. Choose particular sounds, movements, and materials for a purpose.	Introduce and act out storylines with others, creating imaginative narratives that combine music, movement, and dialogue. Play cooperatively as part of a group to develop and perform shared ideas and stories.
How adults/environment can facilitate development:					
<p>Adults:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support children to gain confidence in representing and sharing their ideas in their own way. • Be aware of the link between imaginative play and narrative development, helping children to structure their ideas into simple stories. • Recognise and promote children's agency by valuing their unique viewpoints and creative choices. • Support communication through movement, responding to and joining in with expressive actions linked to their imaginative ideas. • Introduce and model descriptive language to help children talk about their creative processes and imaginative experiences. • Celebrate children's imaginative work by sharing and displaying their creations through performances, photos, and learning journeys. <p>Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrich indoor and outdoor spaces with materials, resources, natural objects, images, music, and dance to inspire imagination. • Make materials and creative tools easily accessible so children can explore ideas independently and immediately. • Provide open-ended opportunities and time for children to develop their creative enquiries using materials and tools over extended periods. • Include visual and sensory stimuli (e.g. artwork, natural textures, film, soundscapes) to provoke curiosity and imagination. 					
ELG					
<p>Children at the expected level of development will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invent, adapt and recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher. • Sing a range of well-known nursery rhymes and songs. • Perform songs, rhymes, poems and stories with others and - when appropriate - try to move in time with music. 					