

BUSY PLAY

KEEPING LITTLE HANDS & HEARTS BUSY



WINTER EDITION

Aleza Nowland

INTRODUCTION

Hello and welcome to the WINTER edition of 'Busy Play'. A book designed to give simple ideas for keeping toddlers busy during the wet and cold weather.

The activities are designed to use what is often already around the house, or a substitute can be found for low or no cost. They can be messy, but well worth it for all involved!

I have been keeping toddlers busy for over two decades now. Our first darling arrived in 1999, followed by others in 2001, 2004, 2006, and 2008. Our final little bundle of fun arrived in 2019.

Please do be sure to leave feedback on the activities, send through your busy play ideas, or send a photo of your little one enjoying themselves as they learn through their own busy play.

ACTIVITIES

NO BAKE PLAY DOUGH | PAGE 3

Nothing says early childhood like the smell of homemade play dough. Just as much fun to make as it is to play with!

SPAGHETTI STICKS | PAGE 7

It is surprising how much this super simple activity can keep little ones so busy. Actually, it keeps teenagers occupied as well!

RICE SENSORY PLAY | PAGE 11

This wonderful activity is easy to store, simple to clean up, and great for sibling play.

SHAVING CREAM ART | PAGE 15

Lots of lovely gooey mess for a toddler to enjoy! If there are concerns about the about, have the toddler sit at a table and assist in the clean up afterwards.

PASTA PLAY | PAGE 19

Some cheap pasta, a little colour, and a ball of wool and there will be all sorts of wonderful time filling fun for a small one!

NO BAKE PLAY DOUGH

NO BAKE PLAY DOUGH

- 3 cups plain flour
- 1 cup warm water
- 1 cup salt
- 2 tb oil
- 1 tsp liquid food colouring

METHOD

- Add the salt to the warm water and mix, it won't all dissolve but most will. Stir in the food colouring.
- Make a well in the flour and add the water/salt/colouring and the oil and mix thoroughly, then knead.
- The mixture will make a smooth dough. If too dry add a little water; if too damp add a little flour.
- Store in airtight container when not in use.



LESSONS LEARNED

Our youngest (age 2) absolutely loved this activity because she cooks with anyone that will let her! That means that I needed to keep a particular eye on her wanting to eat it - a cup of salt is usually enough to persuade a little one how icky it is!

This will keep well in a closed container. Preferably in the fridge but in the cooler months it can be stored in a cupboard.

This activity is great for so many reasons:

- For a little person to see from the beginning how something is made
- That they are involved in the whole process
- Pouring and measuring is the beginning of their relationship with maths
- Excellent for learning fine motor control with the dough, roller, shape cutters etc
- Minimal mess factor, especially if a lighter colour is chosen (we found blue would stain skin for a day or so)

SPAGHETTI STICKS

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- Pasta sticks (spaghetti)
- Colander



METHOD

- Let the little one poke the pasta into the holes of the colander in any way they enjoy. They will probably enjoy the snap, snap, snapping sound of the sticks as well!





LESSONS LEARNED

This particular activity looks like it won't amount to much because it looks just too simple .. but oh gosh, it is so fun that even the teenagers had to jump in and have a go!

Packing up is easy, collect all the bits of pasta - broken or otherwise - and store in a container. I can almost guarantee you can pull this one out for several days before they get bored of it. Then you can re-use the pasta in another activity!

This activity is great for so many reasons:

- Very low cost
- Minimal mess (we play on a small cloth that can be picked up and shaken out as needed)
- Great for all ages (please supervise your really young ones)
- Excellent for hand-eye coordination, spatial awareness, dexterity, fine motor control

RICE SENSORY PLAY

RICE SENSORY PLAY

- Rice - this is 5kg brown rice in the photos
- Large container with lid
- Rug or sheet
- Kitchen utensils eg measuring cups, spoon/s whisk, jugs etc

METHOD

- Pour all of the rice into the larger container
- Put the container on a rug or sheet that will make cleaning up a bit easier
- Let your little one pour, scoop, and stir to their hearts content
- Teach them as they play to keep the rice inside the container



LESSONS LEARNED

Whilst you can stay with this simple set up (our toddler requests to play it several times a day!) you could also:

- Colour the rice to add further imaginative play
- Hide appropriate small toys inside the rice that they have to look for - dig for treasure!

Why we loved it:

- It is wonderful for multiple ages - so it makes a great friends or siblings activity, in fact our little one prefers it when others join her in the activity
- This is a wonderful opportunity to teach little one/s how to enjoy a game with rules and consequences - if a mess is made, they help tidy up afterwards
- The measuring and pouring, the textures, exploring

SHAVING CREAM ART

SHAVING CREAM ART

- Shaving cream - I found the cheapest
- Food colouring
- Baking tray
- Elmers glue
- Glitter
- Paper - I chose to use a roll of brown paper that had a waterproof backing

METHOD

- Prepare for a change of clothes but oh gosh this is so worth it!
- Squirt the shaving cream onto the baking tray, add a few drops of colour and add more as desired, experiment with a few colours for a marble effect
- Let them touch and mix and swirl to their hearts content
- Add a little Elmers glue, the texture will change
- The little one can spread it all over the paper for their artwork
- Wipe their hands and let them sprinkle on the glitter



LESSONS LEARNED

I highly recommend running a bath before starting this activity!

We cleared the kitchen table (it has nearly 20 years of all the kids' artwork on it, it is definitely my favourite piece of furniture) and laid out a piece big enough to cover the activity space and decorate simultaneously.

This activity will need monitoring, not just for the mess, but also so they don't eat any of it. Our toddler wasn't tempted so that was a relief.

This activity is wonderful for:

- Sensory play
- Homemade wrapping paper designs
- Responsible play & clean up
- Giggles, so many giggles when we did this!

Please be careful of the surfaces the shaving cream touches. I chose to use the tray both for easy clean up and to protect our play area.

PASTA PLAY

PASTA PLAY

- Various types of dry pasta
- Food colouring
- White vinegar
- Container with tight fitting lid
- Small bowl
- Baking rack
- Somewhere warm to dry the pasta

METHOD

- Pick out a variety of pasta shapes, this is a great activity for a little one to do
- Put the pasta in the container
- In the small bowl mix a teaspoon of colour with a teaspoon of vinegar
- Pour that colour & vinegar mix into the container, put the lid on, let the little one shake like crazy
- Check colour coverage is even, if it isn't add another teaspoon of vinegar
- Pour onto the rack and let it dry - by the fireplace is good
- Store indefinitely in a sealed container



LESSONS LEARNED

Don't worry about the vinegar, the smell will dissipate as it dries.

Experiment with mixing colours and amount of colours.

I laid out brown paper underneath the working space in case of dye drips, definitely helped with clean up!

Our little one LOVED the shaking part, mixing all the colours in!

Not only was the pasta fun to colour, but it can also be used for many ongoing activities:

- Sort by type
- Sort by colour
- String them together
- Lay them out into shapes
- Hide toys amongst them for a game of search for the treasure
- Counting
- Imaginative kitchen play