



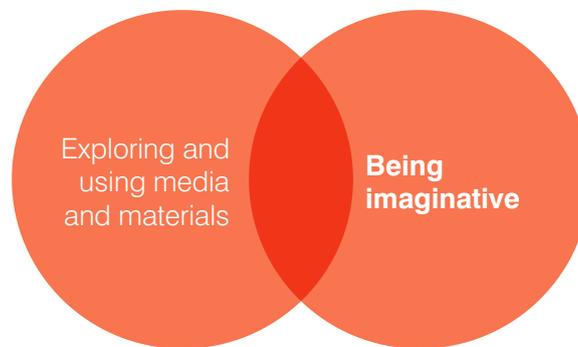
Expressive Arts and Design: Exploring and using media and materials

Introduction

Expressive Arts and Design (EAD) is one of the **four specific areas** of learning in the EYFS framework.

Expressive Arts and Design involves supporting children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas, and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

In the EYFS framework, **Expressive Arts and Design** is made up of two aspects:



Prime and specific areas of learning

- The **three prime areas** of the EYFS are Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED), Physical Development (PD) AND Communication and Language (CL).
- The **four specific areas** are Literacy (L), Mathematics (M), Understanding the World (UW) and Expressive Arts and Design (EAD).
- The **three prime areas** should be the focus for practitioners working with the youngest children as these form the basis for successful learning and progress in the **four specific areas**.
- As children become older the emphasis will shift towards a more equal focus on **all areas of learning** as children's confidence and abilities increase.

Supporting young children to explore and use media and materials

Expressive Arts and Design covers the area of learning and development which was called 'Creative Development' in the original EYFS framework, along with 'Designing and Making' which was previously found in 'Knowledge and Understanding of the World.'

Exploring and using media and materials covers previous aspects of 'Being Creative – Responding to Experiences, Expressing and Communicating Ideas', 'Exploring Media and Materials and Creating Music and Dance', and 'Designing and Making'.

Children's learning and development in this area will be enhanced as they sing songs, make music and dance, and experiment with different ways of doing these activities. As they develop they will use and explore a variety of materials, experimenting with colour, design, texture, shape, and form.

Progress in EAD: Exploring and using media and materials

Under threes

'Any focus on the prime areas will be complemented and reinforced by learning in the specific areas, for example expressive arts is a key route through which children develop language and physical skills.'

[Tickell Review of the EYFS, 2011]

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 use and explore a variety of materials, experimenting with colour, design, texture, shape and form.'

[Statement from Draft EYFS Framework, 2011]

What quality looks like in practice

An early years setting offering sessional early education and childcare for all ages of children in the EYFS has restricted indoor space, so the practitioners make good use of the outdoor environment. The setting serves families from a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Under twos

The children under two share two indoor spaces in the setting – one which is used for active play and mealtimes and one which focuses on restful, reflective activities and sleeping. Background music is played at all times which gives the children the experience of a wide range of music from the many different cultures in the local area.

The toddlers and practitioners enjoy moving and dancing to music, both using CDs and music played by the children and adults. Whenever the opportunity arises, dancing and movement takes place out of doors to provide greater freedom of movement. This also applies to the provision of large scale mark making opportunities for the babies and toddlers out of doors throughout the year.

The limited space indoors is enhanced by the creation of a large sensory shed in the outdoor area to encourage the babies and toddlers to use all their senses and to explore a rich variety of media using whole body movements. Some of the resources in the sensory shed are changed on a monthly basis; these include small mirrors, baskets of reclaimed and natural materials, musical instruments, fabrics and scarves, and construction blocks. Larger equipment, such as the large three-sided mirror, is stored and used in the shed on a permanent basis.

Two- to three-year-olds

As well as the many activities which are provided indoors to encourage the children to explore and use a wide variety of media and materials, the outdoor area is set up to encourage children to experiment with the visual and performing arts and design technology.

The practitioners in the setting are aware of the importance of young children having opportunities to use gross motor skills as a precursor to developing the fine motor skills which are needed for mark making and writing. One of the outer walls of the setting has a large blackboard fixed to it and the children are free to use the range of chalks to draw, write, and leave messages. They enjoy 'painting' with water on the blackboard surface, creating patterns and transient images, and writing their names. The practitioners have provided a range of resources for the children to use when they are designing with water, including sprays, rollers, and large brushes.

As the children's manual dexterity develops they become interested in using fabrics, papers, wool, foil, ribbons and cellophane to create woven designs. The practitioners find that it is much easier for children to weave on a large scale out of doors and they make weaving frames from rigid garden netting and pea netting. The children also enjoy weaving on the picket fence at the edge of the garden.

Four- to five-year-olds

The oldest children in the setting also enjoy the experience of painting and mark making on a large scale out of doors. The practitioners often create a temporary painting area in the garden area, covering surfaces with plastic sheeting and providing large sheets of paper or fabric for painting on. Brushes of many thicknesses and sizes are provided for the children who are encouraged to mix their own colours of paint in small buckets or tins. The children often choose to work collaboratively on group paintings, exploring colour, texture, movement and design as they work.

Making dens out of doors provides the children with excellent opportunities to explore working with resistant materials such as wood, thick card and ridged plastic. They learn about cutting and joining materials, and about how to decide whether or not different materials are fit for their purpose. One of the practitioners has a particular interest in design technology and shares her knowledge and skills about designing and making with the four and five year olds, making sure that they learn the necessary skills to handle tools, equipment and materials safely and effectively.

Music, singing, and dancing takes place indoors on a regular basis but the practitioners of the setting have made sure that children can enjoy the benefits of exploring music out of doors by working with a local artist to provide large scale musical instruments which are available to be played by the children at all times. The outdoor area provides the perfect opportunity for the children to explore sound, rhythm, and movement. Playing music out of doors, along with streamers and ribbons, encourages both boys and girls to move rhythmically and to match their movements to music.

How to help young children to explore and use media and materials

Use these reflective questions to think about how you might support young children to be imaginative.

Under twos

- Do all practitioners show interest in, and knowledge of, the creative and expressive arts and design and, particularly, what it means for babies and toddlers?
- Are all staff aware of the importance of allowing babies and toddlers to explore media and materials in their own way, without being concerned about an end product?
- How well do we use the outdoor environment to foster learning and development in this area?
- Are babies and toddlers given a profusion of multi-sensory experiences?
- Do we use music to change the mood in our setting at different times of the day?
- Are the babies and toddlers given daily opportunities to explore different media and materials?
- Have we tried covering the floor with large sheets of paper for the children to crawl on and mark make with crayons or paint?
- Could we improve the way in which we give information to parents about the importance of children developing their individuality and interests through exploring and using media and materials?

Two- to three-year-olds

- Do all practitioners working with the two- and three-year-olds understand the importance of young children having opportunities to use their gross motor skills as a precursor to developing the fine motor skills which are essential for later mark making?
- Do we value the ways in which individual young children express themselves in paintings and drawings without trying to influence what they produce?
- Could we improve the way in which the outdoor area has been planned to make the most of opportunities for encouraging children to experiment with the visual and performing arts and design technology?
- Do we make provision for the children to engage in activities which help develop their manual dexterity?
- Do the two and three year olds have access to clay as well as other malleable materials to pinch, poke and model with?
- Are ribbons and streamers provided for the children to use when they are moving out of doors or dancing to music?
- How well do we explain to parents that it is the learning process, not the finished product, which matters?
- Can we help them to value the representations which their children produce?

Four- to five-year-olds

- As a setting, do we use any of our professional development time to share and practise our skills and knowledge in the area of expressive arts?
- How well do all practitioners understand the process of design technology – identifying a need or problem, proposing a solution, realising a design, and then evaluating the final product? Do we know what this means in the context of young children's learning and development?
- Do all practitioners have the skills and confidence to help children develop their skills, understanding, and techniques in using paint, clay, fabrics, instruments, tools, and equipment?
- Are children encouraged to work collaboratively when they explore media, materials, and design?
- How regularly do we review the quality of the materials and equipment which we provide for children to use to ensure that they always have access to a wide range of high quality equipment and resources to extend their learning and development?
- Do we provide resources and experiences which will engage the interest of boys as well as girls – for example painting on a large scale, on different surfaces, and out of doors?
- Could we improve the way we draw on the different cultures and ethnicities of the families who attend our setting to enrich the experiences we provide in expressive arts and design?
- Do we invite parents and other family members into our setting to share their interests, talents, and skills in using media and materials and design technology?

Ideas for parents

This area of learning and development is about how children sing songs, make music and dance, and try different ways and materials when they experiment with colour, design, texture, shape and form.

Helping your child to explore different media and materials

There are lots of easy ways you can help your child to explore and use different media and materials.

You could use the ideas below as starting points to help you do this.

Under twos

- Drawing can be done with the under twos in lots of different ways – with chubby crayons on paper, with a lolly stick in sand or mud, or in a tray of damp sand with twigs, spoons or brushes.
- Most children enjoy painting on large sheets of paper using their hands, feet, fingers or toes. Remember that not all children enjoy painting with their bodies.
- Try making art out of doors by rolling balls, tins, or wheeled toys through paint on a roll of wallpaper.
- When you go the park, collect twigs, leaves, and grasses. Talk to your baby or toddler as you collect them and make patterns and pictures with them on the ground.
- Sing songs with your child when you are out for a walk. Try 'Incy, wincy spider', 'Rock a bye baby', 'Twinkle, twinkle little star' or 'One, two, three, four five, Once I caught a fish alive'. Sing them again when you get home and add any actions you know which go with the songs for your child to copy.
- When babies and toddlers begin to express themselves in singing or by making marks – in their food or with a crayon or pencil – the results of what they do must be valued as part of their learning and development.
- Some babies and toddlers are fascinated by what things do and how things behave – you can encourage them to handle everyday things which interest them and help them to see how things work. This is part of design technology for babies and toddlers.

Two- to three-year-olds

- Sing songs with your child indoors and out of doors. Being out of doors sometimes means you can sing more loudly! Try 'The sun has got his hat on', 'Here we go round the mulberry bush', or 'The wheels on the bus'.
- You can also have fun using action songs with your two- and three-year-old as they really enjoy repetition. Good action songs include 'Miss Polly had a dolly', 'I'm a little teapot' and 'Heads, shoulders, knees and toes.'
- Why not make instruments to accompany your singing – make a drum from a pan and wooden spoon, shakers from empty plastic containers filled with dried peas or beans, cymbals from pan lids and a microphone from rolled up paper or the tube from inside a kitchen roll.
- Make streamers from strips of plastic or paper, tie them to a stick or clothes peg and watch what happens when you run or dance with them out of doors.
- Your child will have fun 'painting' with water out of doors on a wall or fence using real decorators' paint brushes.
- Provide your child with crayons, paints or chalks to create pictures and patterns. Remember how important it is to value the finished pictures as your child's work of art.
- Children need to acquire some skills to fully explore the different ways of exploring different media and materials. Help them to practise tearing, cutting, sticking, threading, and weaving using scraps of paper, fabrics, wools and ribbons.

Four- to five-year-olds

- Four- and five-year-olds love using paint in different ways. Try making prints using cut up potatoes and carrots or use cotton reels, large buttons or pebbles and shells.
- Try making collage pictures with scraps of paper, fabric, wool, sequins, buttons, and natural materials such as leaves and grasses.
- Use playdough or clay as a base to make 3D models with twigs, shells, stones or nuts and bolts.
- Some children, often boys, prefer to use fine pencil to make detailed technical drawings. Encourage them to draw items you have in the kitchen such as forks, spoons or a hand held whisk. They may also like to draw the detail of flowers and plants from the garden.
- Children of four and five become very involved in role play and enjoy dressing up. They don't need expensive readymade dressing up costumes; hats, scarves, bags, simple cloaks, and masks provide hours of fun.

- Building a den is a great way of children learning how to design and build on a large scale out of doors. Large cardboard boxes are great for this.
- When you are painting, sewing, or making or mending things around the house, show your child how to use the tools and equipment safely.