

Swirl, Mix, and Dot

Using Paint with Tiny Hands

Painting is creative and can be relaxing for children. It also builds fine motor control and coordination. Some adults are not comfortable painting at home because it can get messy. But there are ways to control the mess by using only a little paint or painting outside.

Note: Supplies that are underlined can be found in your kit. Supplies in *italics* you might have in your home or you can use something similar.

Tool Tips

Provide small amounts of paint and water to reduce spills. If working inside, cover the area with something like newspaper or an old tablecloth. Be sure to use washable, non-toxic paints. Cotton swabs (Q-Tips) should never go in eyes, ears, or noses.

Things to Try with 2 to 3-Year Olds

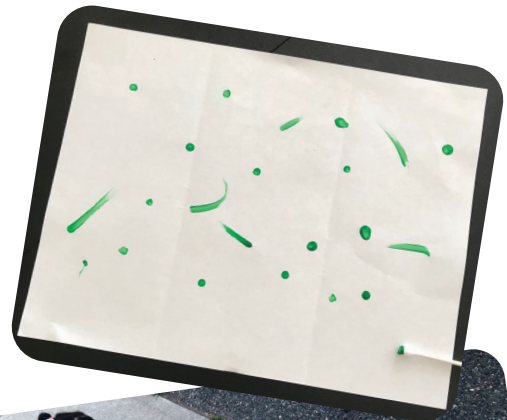
- **Making marks.** Give your child one color of paint in a plastic cup. Encourage them to try the paintbrush, a cotton swab, and even one finger. They can make dots, lines, and shapes on their paper.
- **Mixing colors.** Give your child two or three colors of paint. Encourage them to mix a little bit of two or more of the colors together on their paper. They can add more or less of each color to see what happens.
- **Painting with water.** Try this outside on the sidewalk. Give your child a paintbrush and a little water. Encourage them to paint on the pavement or a rock. Take photos to help them remember what they made.



The Basics

Help your child learn to use a paintbrush. Even if it's not their first time, they might need reminders.

- Show them different ways to hold the brush.
- Smushing the brush down on the paper can make interesting shapes. But it can also cause frustration if the paper tears or the brush bristles get flat.
- Encourage them to rinse and dry their brush as needed.



More! 

Things to Try with 3 to 5-Year Olds

- **Many different ways.** Invite your child to use cotton swabs to create dot paintings. Or explore ways of using just the tip of the paintbrush to make thinner lines and thicker lines. If painting outdoors with water, try using the brush to make a splatter painting.
- **Tracing and copying.** Help your child draw some favorite shapes, letters, or numbers with a pencil on paper. Invite them to trace over or copy the pencil lines with cotton swabs and paint. After the paint dries, encourage them to practice their scissors skills and cut out the shapes or letters.
- **Storytelling with paint.** If your child is painting a picture, talk with them about the shapes and colors on their paper. As they work, avoid guessing what they are painting. When they are done, ask your child to tell you what is happening in the picture so you can help them write it down.



Bonus!

Full Body Activity. Turn on some music and invite your child to paint to the music. If you are comfortable, encourage your child to stand as they paint. Change the type of music and do a new painting. See how the type of music changes what and how they paint! After you clean up the paint, listen to the same music and dance together. Do your dances remind you of their paintings?

Things to Say

“I see a blue line and two red circles.”

As you watch your child paint, share what you see. Don't try to guess what your child is painting.

“What can you tell me about your painting?”

Many children will be excited to talk about their work as they are painting or when they are done. Invite them to describe their painting to you.

“How did painting this make you feel?”

Painting is a personal and creative experience. Children may enjoy sharing their feelings about it. You might learn something new about your child when they paint.