

How Process-Focused Art Experiences Support Preschoolers

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Is your goal to encourage children's creativity through developmentally appropriate art experiences? Review the differences between process- and product-focused art to help you get started.

Characteristics of process-focused art experiences

- There are no step-by-step instructions
- There is no sample for children to follow
- There is no right or wrong way to explore and create
- The art is focused on the experience and on exploration of techniques, tools, and materials
- The art is unique and original
- The experience is relaxing or calming
- The art is entirely the children's own
- The art experience is a child's choice
- Ideas are not readily available online

What children might say

“Look what I made!” “I’m going to do another!”

“Can I have more time?”

Characteristics of product-focused art experiences

- Children have instructions to follow
- The teacher created a sample for children to copy
- There’s a right and a wrong way to proceed
- There’s a finished product in mind
- The children’s finished art all looks the same
- The children experience frustration
- The teacher might “fix mistakes”
- The whole class took part in an art project at the same time
- Patterns and examples are readily available online

What children might say

“Can I be done now?”

“Is this right?”

“I can’t do it.”

“Mine doesn’t look like yours.”

Provide open-ended, creative art experiences by offering activities such as

- Easel painting with a variety of paints and paintbrushes (with no directions)
- Watercolor painting
- Exploring and creating with clay
- Finger painting
- Painting with unusual tools like toothbrushes, paint rollers, potato mashers
- Printing and stamping (stamps purchased or made with sponges)
- Creating spin art using a record player and paint, squirt bottles, paintbrushes, or markers
- Stringing beads independently and creatively
- Weaving cloth, yarn, or paper
- Drawing with pencils, art pens, various sizes of markers, or crayons
- Using homemade doughs
- Making collages using tissue paper, various sizes of paper, glue, paste, glue sticks, scissors, and recycled materials

Tips for leading process-focused art

1. Approach art like open-ended play—for example, provide a variety of materials and see what happens as the child leads the art experience
2. Make art a joyful experience. Let children use more paint, more colors, and make more and more artwork
3. Provide plenty of time for children to carry out their plans and explorations
4. Let children come and go from their art at will
5. Notice and comment on what you see: Look at all the yellow dots you painted
6. Say YES to children's ideas
7. Offer new and interesting materials
8. Play music in the background
9. Take art materials outside in the natural light
10. Display children's books with artful illustrations, such as those by Eric Carle, Lois Ehlert, and Javaka Steptoe
11. Let the children choose whether their art goes home or stays in the classroom
12. Remember that it's the children's art, not yours

What children do and learn through process-focused art

Social and emotional

Children relax, focus, feel successful, and can express their feelings

Language and literacy

Children may choose to discuss their art and add print to it (on their own or by dictating to a teacher)

Cognitive

Children compare, predict, plan, and problem solve

Physical

Children use small motor skills to paint, write, glue, use clay, and make collages

Resources

Spotlight on Young Children and the Creative Arts, edited by Derry Koralek. This NAEYC publication focuses on both understanding and doing creative arts with young children.

More Than Painting, Preschool and Kindergarten: Exploring the Wonders of Art, by Sally Moomaw and Brenda Hieronymus. This book provides many process art activity ideas.

The Creative Arts: A Process Approach for Teachers and Children, by Linda Carol Edwards. A textbook format that provides a foundation for understanding process in art, music, and drama activities with young children.

<http://prekandksharing.blogspot.com/2012/02/making-transition-from-produ...>

www.ooneygooney.com/handouts/art.pdf

www.pinterest.com/cricketteacher/process-art-activities

Audience: *Teacher*

Age: *Preschool*

Topics: *Subject Areas, Creative Arts, Art, TYC*

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