

Teaching Art Procedures

It is an investment in the future to teach children how to appropriately use materials; once the children have mastered the rules, the teacher can use her time in more important ways than putting on aprons or cleaning up tables. She will be free to scan the room and look for places where children need her timely coaching to manage themselves in their play and social interaction. Just as individual mastery of traffic rules allows the freeway to flow, knowing the procedures for play with different equipment allows children freedom in their play. Once children learn the way to use materials and how to put them away when finished, they can choose and use whatever they want in the classroom and the yard without needing permission or help from the teacher.

When all the teachers in the school know and use the same procedures in the same circumstances and for the same activities (for instance, all children from the toddlers to the five-year-olds use the same procedure while painting at the easel), the children have consistent direction and only need to learn the rules once.

The procedure includes a consistent structure within which the children have a lot of freedom to decide how they want to use the supplies. The goal for each procedure is to give the child freedom to use the materials with a minimum of adult interference.

Children who are new to a material need to know every step:

- how to know it is available [eg, if it is on the shelf it is available]
- where to use it [Table? Easel? Floor? Yard?]
- how many children can use it at once [Number of chairs, easels, trays, etc.]
- where the finished artwork goes [in the child's cubby, or a drying rack]
- where to replace the remaining supplies [back on the shelf]
- cleanup [hang up apron, wash hands, wipe table with sponge]

Following are a few basic procedures for art materials:

Painting Procedure

The child

- Chooses apron, puts it on, and pushes up sleeves.
- Brings cup of paint from table to easel.
- Teacher puts child's name on back of paper.
- Paints (one color at a time only). When he wants to change colors, he replaces cup on the table and selects another.
- Paints with one paintbrush at a time and replaces the brush in its own cup without mixing colors in the cup.
- Replaces paint cup on table
- Fastens clothespins and hangs painting to dry.

- Hangs apron on hook.
- Washes hands and pulls down sleeves.

The teacher

- Avoids unnecessary conversation, allowing the child to deeply engage
- May admire paintings.
- May name different colors for the child.
- Does not ask child what she is making or suggest things she can make.

Art Table/Drawing Area Procedure

The child:

- Chooses paper plus crayons, scissors, tape, glue, paper, etc. as desired from shelf
- Carries materials to an open seat at the art table
- Draws on paper, cuts paper, tapes, staples paper
- Puts completed artwork in cubby
- Returns supplies to shelf
- Cleans up any scraps and puts in recycling can
- Pushes chair under table to show he is done with it

The teacher

- Ensures that supplies are replenished and tidy
- Rotates more challenging items onto the shelf as children master simpler items
- Writes names on papers if child cannot
- Assists in spelling/writing words as children begin to want labels on art
- Remembers that the children are interested only in the process of using the materials. They have very little interest in their “finished” work, until representative art appears at about 4 1/2 years.

Adaptation for Young Two-year-olds:

Remember that children younger than 2½ or 3 are not easily able to share containers, nor are they able to stay focused with too much clutter. Thus these modifications should be made to an art area for this age group:

- Limit the number of media available
- Keep materials simple – crayons, not markers; paste, not glue
- Provide multiple containers of the same supplies , e.g., 4 small baskets with 6 crayons in each, rather than 1 big basket with 100 crayons.

Clay Or Playdough

Clay and playdough offer different experiences, so they are generally offered separately. Be careful to clean tools and trays between use if the same ones are used for clay and playdough.

The child:

- Puts on an apron (for clay)

- Carries a board or tray to the table
- Chooses a ball of clay or playdough and puts it on the board or tray
- Chooses tools and puts them on the board or tray
- Experiments with pounding, thumping with a fist, rolling out with a cylinder or rolling pin, poked with fingers or tools
- Return to container (playdough to covered plastic container, clay under a damp cloth in the storage crock)
- Hang up apron
- Wash hands

The teacher

- may show the child some basic ways to use clay (rolling, poking, pinching, pounding), then return clay into a ball for the child to use
- ensures that the tools she puts out are suitable for the children's development
- keeps clay and playdough fresh and pliable
- For clay - sets out small bowls with a wet sponge to experiment with water on clay
- Cleans up boards, trays and tools after use (especially for clay)