

MAKING PLAY DOUGH AT HOME

Did someone in your family make tortillas or pie crusts (or both) when you were a child? Did they let you play with some *masa* or dough while they baked? Did you decorate yours with cinnamon or raisins? Roll it out and ball it up again so many times it was grimy by the time you were finished? Wasn't it fun?

Even if you don't roll out home-made tortillas or pie crusts much any more, your child might still like to play with dough, too. And you *don't have to buy it* in boxes in the toy store. **Here's a recipe for making play dough that your child can play with at home:**

- 1 ½ C flour + ½ C salt + ¼ C oil + About ¼ C water
- a couple of drops of food color (add it to the water)

Mix all the ingredients in a large bowl. Let your child knead the mixture until it's smooth. Is it too wet? Add a little flour. Too dry? Add a little water.

That's all there is to it! Now you're ready for play. It's a good idea to cover the table with oilcloth so *your child can clearly see where you want him to play* and so he can clean up easily when he's finished. *Please don't clean up for him.* Show your child how to wipe the oilcloth when playtime is over and how to put away his play dough when he's finished. It's a good idea to store it in a plastic bag in the refrigerator, so it lasts longer.

The *youngest child can have a good time with play dough*—rolling out “snakes” and coiling them into little pots or doing what you did—just rolling out the dough again and again, and then, balling it right back up again.

Why is playing with play dough such a good idea? How does it help children get ready for later learning? Well, it's great exercise for small muscles and for coordinating what the eyes see with what the hands do, or eye-hand coordination. And, obviously, if you give your child cookie cutters or letter shapes to press into the dough, she'll practice making and recognizing shapes. That will help later when she makes and recognizes other shapes in school—like letters and words.

But the real and maybe *the best reason to play with dough you and your child make together at home is because it's fun. You'll find yourself talking together and having a good time. And that's a good enough reason to play!*