The Child Unplugged

COLOURS: EXPLORE, MATCH, LEA'RN

Simple play ideas to connect.
Explore & Support yours babies developmenr

15
Simple Play Ideas



0-12 Months

Introduction

Children naturally explore colours through play. Colour activities help children recognise, sort, match, and compare colours while encouraging curiosity and discovery. Through these playful experiences, children build important early skills in maths, problem-solving, visual discrimination, and observation in a fun and engaging way. Colour play helps children make sense of the world around them. Through sorting, matching, comparing, and exploring colours, children develop important cognitive, language, and motor skills while building confidence in their ability to observe, think, and learn independently.





Why Colour Activity Is So Valuable

These activities encourage:

- Colour recognition and identification
- Sorting, matching, and classifying skills
- Early maths concepts such as patterns and grouping
- Problem-solving and critical thinking
- Fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination
- Visual discrimination and observation skills
- Language development through naming and describing colours
- Concentration, memory, and independent learning



How to Support Play at Home

Create a playful space where children explore colours through hands-on activities. They identify, match, sort, and compare different colours while noticing similarities, differences, and patterns.

Basic setup:

- Different coloured objects (pom poms, blocks, buttons, lids, craft sticks)
- Sorting trays, bowls, or hoops
- Paper, pencils, or crayons for colour recording (optional)

Simple steps:

- Introduce a variety of colours.
- Allow children to explore and observe freely.
- Encourage them to sort or match colours.
- Invite them to name colours and talk about what they notice.

Helpful tips:

- Start with just a few colours.
- Use familiar everyday objects.
- Encourage colour conversations during play.







Ideas

Provide everyday items in a variety of colours and invite children to sort, match, group, and compare them. Encourage discussion about colours they see in their environment while supporting confidence and learning through play.

COLOUR POSTING ACTIVITY

WHATS NEEDED:

- Coloured tubes, containers, or boxes
- Coloured craft sticks, cards, counters, or pom poms
- Tray or basket for setup
- Colour labels (optional)

WHAT TO DO:

- Set up the coloured containers and matching items.
- Invite children to choose an item.
- Identify the colour together.
- Post the item into the matching coloured container.
- Continue until all items have been sorted.

BENEFITS:

- Encourages colour recognition
- Develops sorting and matching skills
- Strengthens fine motor skills
- Improves hand-eye coordination
- Builds concentration and focus
- Supports problem-solving skills
- Encourages independent learning



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with two or three colours for younger learners.
- Add more colours as confidence grows.
- Use larger items for easier posting.
- Introduce tongs for an extra fine motor challenge.
- Sort objects by both colour and size.
- Encourage children to name colours as they post each item.

NATURE COLOUR MATCH

WHATS NEEDED:

- Colour cards or coloured paper
- Basket, tray, or collection container
- Natural materials (leaves, flowers, petals, stones, sticks, etc.)
- Outdoor space or nature area

WHAT TO DO:

- Place colour cards on a tray or table.
- Collect natural items from the environment.
- Match each item to the closest colour card.
- Talk about the colours and textures of the items.
- Continue until all colours have been explored.

BENEFITS:

- Encourages colour recognition
- Develops observation skills
- Promotes sensory exploration
- Supports language and vocabulary development
- Encourages connection with nature
- Builds concentration and focus
- Strengthens sorting and matching skills



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with two or three colours for younger learners.
- Use larger, brightly coloured natural items.
- Add more colour cards for a challenge.
- Sort items by colour before matching.
- Explore seasonal colours in nature.
- Encourage children to describe the items they find and match.

COLOUR PLAYDOUGH INVITATION

WHATS NEEDED:

- Different coloured playdough
- Matching loose parts (buttons, pom poms, beads, gems, craft sticks, etc.)
- Tray or play surface
- Playdough tools (optional)

WHAT TO DO:

- Set out coloured playdough and matching loose parts.
- Encourage children to explore, create, and decorate the playdough.
- Match loose parts to the corresponding colours.
- Talk about the colours and creations as they play.

BENEFITS:

- Encourages colour recognition
- Develops fine motor skills and hand strength
- Promotes creativity and imagination
- Supports sensory exploration
- Builds concentration and focus
- Encourages language development
- Strengthens hand-eye coordination



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with two or three colours for younger learners.
- Add more colours as confidence grows.
- Use themed loose parts (nature, animals, transport, etc.).
- Encourage colour sorting before decorating.
- Mix colours together to explore colour changes.
- Use playdough tools for additional fine motor challenges

COLOUR TREASURE HUNT

WHATS NEEDED:

- Colour cards or coloured paper
- Basket, bucket, or collection tray
- Indoor or outdoor play space
- Everyday objects or natural materials

WHAT TO DO:

- Choose a colour to hunt for.
- Invite children to search for objects that match the colour.
- Collect the items in a basket or tray.
- Name the colours and compare the objects found.
- Repeat with different colours.

BENEFITS:

- Encourages colour recognition
- Develops observation skills
- Supports language and vocabulary development
- Promotes problem-solving and critical thinking
- Encourages movement and active learning
- Builds concentration and focus
- Strengthens sorting and matching skills
- Fosters curiosity about the environment



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with one colour for younger learners.
- Use colour cards as visual prompts.
- Hunt for multiple colours at once for a challenge.
- Sort the collected items by colour afterwards.
- Explore indoors, outdoors, or in nature.
- Encourage children to describe the objects they find.

MONOCHROME COLOR TRAY

WHATS NEEDED:

- Shallow tray or basket
- Objects in one color (e.g., toys, blocks, spoons, fabric, pom-poms)
- Items with varied textures (soft, rough, smooth, bumpy)
- Optional learning tools (letters, numbers, shape sorters)
- Real-life items in the same color (e.g., lids, buttons, utensils)
- Matching cards or sorting challenges (optional)

WHAT TO DO:

- Pick one color (e.g., red, blue) as the theme.
- Use a shallow tray or basket.
- Collect same-colored toys and objects.
- Add various textures (soft, rough, smooth).
- Include different sizes/shapes for sorting.
- Add simple learning tools (blocks, cards).
- Place tray at child's level for easy access.
- Talk about colors, textures, and shapes.
- Change the color weekly to keep it fun.

BENEFITS:

- Develops color recognition – focuses on shades of a single color.
- Enhances sorting and categorization skills – children group items by hue or tone.
- Strengthens fine motor skills – picking up and arranging objects improves hand control.
- Encourages observation and attention to detail – children notice subtle differences in color.
- Supports early math skills – counting, comparing, and arranging items in order.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Younger toddlers:** Use 3–4 simple items in distinct shades; focus on free exploration.
- **Older toddlers/preschoolers:** Add more shades, smaller objects, or multiple textures for challenge.
- **Learning twist:** Sort by size, shape, or material in addition to color.
- **Creative variation:** Encourage children to make patterns, gradients, or designs using the monochrome items.

COLOUR SORTING

WHATS NEEDED:

- Coloured objects (e.g. pom poms, blocks, buttons)
- Sorting containers (bowls, trays, cups)
- Optional tools (tongs, spoons, tweezers for fine motor practice)
- Colour labels or mats for matching
- A clear play surface for easy sorting

WHAT TO DO:

- Gather small household items of different colors and place them in a basket
- Provide multiple bowls for sorting
- Encourage your child to sort items by color, size, or type
- Let little hands explore freely and experiment with different arrangements
- Keep it playful and open-ended to spark curiosity and learning

BENEFITS:

- Boosts colour recognition and visual discrimination
- Supports early cognitive and categorisation skills
- Enhances fine motor development through picking and placing
- Encourages language development as colours are named and described
- Builds early math skills like grouping, matching & comparing
- Improves focus, concentration & attention to detail



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Younger toddlers:** Use a few basic colors and larger objects for easy handling.
- **Older toddlers/preschoolers:** Introduce more colors, smaller items, or patterns to sort.
- **Fine motor challenge:** Use tongs, tweezers, or scoops to pick up items.
- **Math extension:** Count items in each group or compare which has more/less.
- **Creative twist:** Sort by multiple attributes (color + shape or size) or create color patterns.

RAINBOW COLLAGE CRAFT

WHATS NEEDED:

- Rainbow outline template or plain paper
- Coloured paper or tissue paper
- Pom-poms, buttons, coloured pasta, or loose craft materials(optional)
- Glue or glue sticks
- Child-safe scissors (optional)
- Cotton wool for clouds (optional)

WHAT TO DO:

- Get a ready rainbow outline.
- Invite children to choose colourful materials for each rainbow stripe.
- Tear, stick, arrange, and decorate the rainbow using different textures and colours.
- Add cotton wool clouds or extra decorations if desired.
- Allow children to explore freely and create their own rainbow in their own unique way.

BENEFITS:

- Strengthens fine motor skills through tearing and sticking
- Encourages colour recognition and sorting
- Develops hand-eye coordination
- Supports creativity and independent decision-making
- Introduces texture and sensory exploration
- Promotes focus and concentration through hands-on play



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For toddlers:** Use larger materials and pre-cut pieces for easier handling.
- **For older children:** Encourage pattern-making or rainbow sequencing challenges.
- **For sensory play:** Add textured materials like felt, foil, or fabric scraps.
- **For nature-based play:** Use flower petals, leaves, or natural loose parts.
- **For group activities:** Create one large collaborative classroom rainbow.

RAINBOW SPAGHETTI

WHATS NEEDED:

- Cooked spaghetti
- Food coloring
- Oil (optional, prevents sticking)
- Ziploc bags
- Plastic container for storage
- Optional: tongs, spoons, sprinkle-safe glitter, small toys for play

WHAT TO DO:

- Divide cooked spaghetti into separate Ziploc bags.
- Add a few drops of food coloring to each bag.
- Add a tiny splash of oil (optional) and shake the bag until the color spreads.
- Leave for 5–10 minutes, then rinse lightly if needed.
- Place into a container and let the sensory fun begin!

BENEFITS:

- Builds fine motor skills (pulling, squishing, scooping)
- Supports color recognition and sorting
- Encourages sensory exploration in a safe, edible way
- Helps with focus and calming through tactile play
- Boosts creativity and imaginative play



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Babies/Toddlers: Keep longer noodles for easy gripping; skip the oil.
- Older Kids: Add scissors for snipping practice or create “spaghetti art.”
- Themed Play: Add toy insects, kitchen tools, or color-matching cups.
- Learning Focus: Use it for counting, patterning, or sorting by color.

COLORED BREAD CRUMBS

WHATS NEEDED:

- Slices of bread
- Food coloring
- Milk (just a little for mixing color)
- Food processor or blender
- Sensory tray
- Scoops, spoons, cups, or small toys for play

WHAT TO DO:

- Add a few drops of food coloring to a splash of milk and stir.
- Lightly brush or dip bread into the colored milk (don't oversoak).
- Let the bread dry completely—air dry or oven for quicker drying.
- Once dry, place bread in a food processor and pulse until crumbly.
- Pour the colorful crumbs into the sensory tray.

BENEFITS:

- Sensory exploration
- Soft, crumbly textures and bright colors engage multiple senses.
- Fine motor skills
- Creativity & imagination: Kids create patterns, "landscapes," and colorful mixes.
- Safe, edible play
- Color recognition & early science: Mixing colors and watching bread transform builds early learning.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Color themes:** Rainbow trays, holiday colors, or pastels for a calm setup.
- **Texture mix:** Combine coarse and fine crumbs for extra sensory interest.
- **Hide-and-seek play:** Bury small toys or objects to dig out.
- **Color sorting:** Make separate colors and let kids sort or mix them.
- **Add scents:** Use a drop of vanilla or cocoa powder for a gentle aroma.

ICE PAINTING

WHATS NEEDED:

- Ice cube trays
- Water
- Food colouring (or liquid watercolours)
- Paper (thicker paper works best to prevent warping)
- Tray or plate to contain drips
- Optional: small toys, glitter, or salt for added texture

WHAT TO DO:

- Mix water with food colouring and pour into ice cube trays. Freeze until solid.
- Place a piece of paper on a tray to catch drips.
- Remove coloured ice cubes and encourage children to “paint” on the paper as the ice melts.
- Observe how the colours spread, blend, and change as the ice melts.
- Discuss what is happening to the ice and how it transforms from solid to liquid.

BENEFITS:

- Cause-and-Effect Learning: Children see how the ice melts and moves across the paper, connecting actions to outcomes.
- Science Exploration: Introduces concepts like temperature, states of matter (solid to liquid), and melting.
- Fine Motor Skills: Holding and manipulating ice cubes strengthens grip and hand-eye coordination.
- Sensory Play: The cold sensation of ice adds a tactile element to painting.
- Creativity & Expression



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Age-Friendly:** Bigger ice for toddlers, smaller or shaped ice for older kids.
- **Indoor/Outdoor:** Outdoors for messy fun; indoors with trays to catch melting water.
- **Themed Colors & Shapes:** Holiday colors, seasonal pastels, or fun molds like stars and hearts.
- **Different Surfaces:** Paper, cardstock, fabric, or windows for creative effects.
- **Mixed Media:** Combine with stamping, sponges, or layered colors for texture.

COLOUR MIXING STATION

WHATS NEEDED:

- Clear cups, jars, or small bowls
- Droppers, pipettes, or small spoons
- Water dyed in primary colours (red, blue, yellow)
- Optional: trays to contain spills

WHAT TO DO:

- Set out cups of coloured water and droppers
- Invite children to use droppers to mix colours, observe changes, and transfer liquids between cups.
- Predict outcomes of mixing two colours.
- Layer colours to create gradients.
- Explore patterns and shapes on the tray.
- Discuss results: “What colour did red and yellow make?”

BENEFITS:

- **Science** – Mix primary colours to discover new ones.
- **Sensory** – Explore liquid textures and colour blending.
- **Visual Skills** – Notice subtle changes and layering.
- **Fine Motor** – Use droppers or pipettes for control.
- **Problem-Solving** – Predict and test colour outcomes.
- **Creativity** – Create patterns, gradients, and abstract designs.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Light Table** – Colours glow and mix in a new way.
- **Paint** – Use water-based paint for thicker, tactile mixing.
- **Tools** – Add pipettes, syringes, or brushes.
- **Patterns** – Drip onto paper for creative designs.
- **Story** – Make it a “magic potion” activity.

POTATO PRINTING

WHATS NEEDED:

- Potatoes
- Knife and or cutters
- Chopping board
- Paint
- Paper
- Brush (optional)

WHAT TO DO:

- Materials: Potatoes, knife (adult use), child-safe paints, trays, paper
- Prepare Potatoes: Cut in half; leave natural shapes or carve simple patterns
- Paint: Pour colors into shallow trays
- Stamp: Dip the potato in the paint and press it onto the paper
- Experiment: Layer colors, mix patterns, repeat designs
- Clean Up: Wipe potatoes and use paper towels
- Enjoy: Let prints dry and display artwork

BENEFITS:

- A tried and tested classic! Painting with potato stamps is lots of fun, cheap, and easy to do at home. Toddlers and preschoolers will love getting their hands messy and creating some great pieces of art.
- Stamps are also good for:

1. Fostering creativity and a sense of achievement
2. Developing hand-eye coordination
3. Exploring emotions and feelings



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Age-Friendly:** Toddlers can use whole potato halves for easy stamping; older kids can carve more detailed shapes or patterns.
- **Indoor/Outdoor:** Indoors with trays or newspaper to catch paint; outdoors for messier, bigger stamping fun.
- **Different Shapes & Patterns:** Try stars, hearts, stripes, or seasonal shapes like leaves or pumpkins.
- **Mix Colors:** Layer multiple colors or dip different potatoes in different paints for variety.

POM POM SORTING

WHATS NEEDED:

- Bowl/tray
- Pom poms
- Tweezers
- Sorting tray/pots

WHAT TO DO:

- Place a mix of colourful pom poms in a bowl or tray.
- Provide small bowls or containers for sorting.
- Give your child tweezers, tongs, or fingers to pick up the pom poms.
- Encourage them to sort the pom poms by colour into the different bowls.
- Let them transfer, count, or move the pom poms between containers for extra play.

BENEFITS:

- Strengthens fine motor skills and hand muscles.
- Improves hand–eye coordination.
- Encourages colour recognition and early sorting skills.
- Builds concentration and problem-solving.
- Supports early counting and math concepts.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- For younger children, let them sort using their hands and fewer colours.
- For older children, add tweezers or tongs for more challenge.
- Introduce counting as they sort each pom pom.
- Use cups with colour labels or pictures for matching.
- Turn it into a timed game or pattern-making activity.

COLORED CHIC PEAS

WHATS NEEDED:

- Dried chickpeas
- Food coloring or liquid watercolors
- Small containers or zip-lock bags for coloring
- Muffin trays, bowls, or sensory trays for play
- Spoons, scoops, or small cups for handling

WHAT TO DO:

- Place dried chickpeas into a container or bag
- Add a few drops of food coloring or liquid watercolors
- Shake or stir until the chickpeas are evenly coated
- Let them dry completely before use
- Transfer to sensory trays or containers for play

BENEFITS:

- Encourages sensory exploration (touch, sight, color)
- Supports fine motor skills through scooping, pouring, and sorting
- Promotes creativity and imaginative play
- Introduces early math concepts (counting, sorting, patterns)
- Safe tactile play without ingestion



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children (2+ years):** Use fewer chickpeas at a time and larger scoops or cups for handling; supervise closely
- **For older children:** Introduce sorting by color, counting, or pattern-making activities
- **For sensory-sensitive children:** Encourage use of tools (spoons, scoops) instead of hands initially
- **For group play:** Provide individual trays to avoid conflicts and encourage parallel or collaborative play



Red



Yellow



Blue



Black



Green

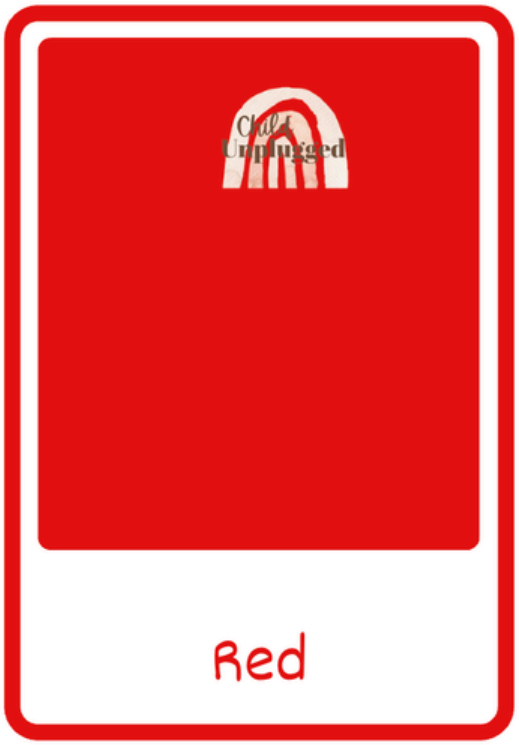


Violet



Orange

Indigo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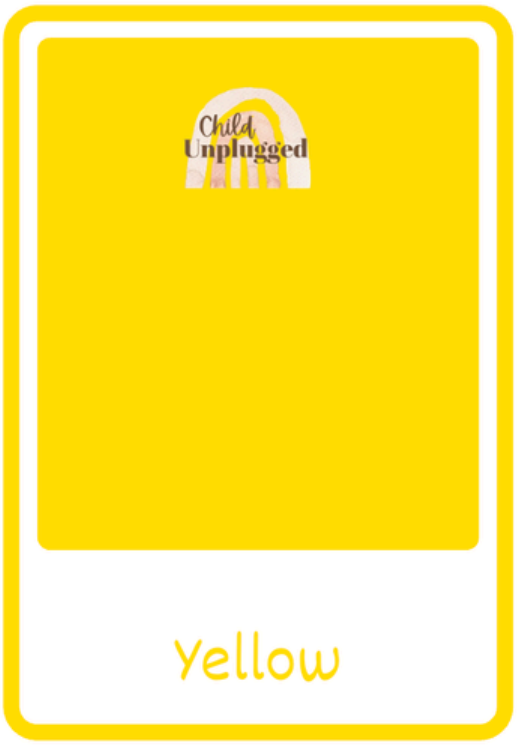
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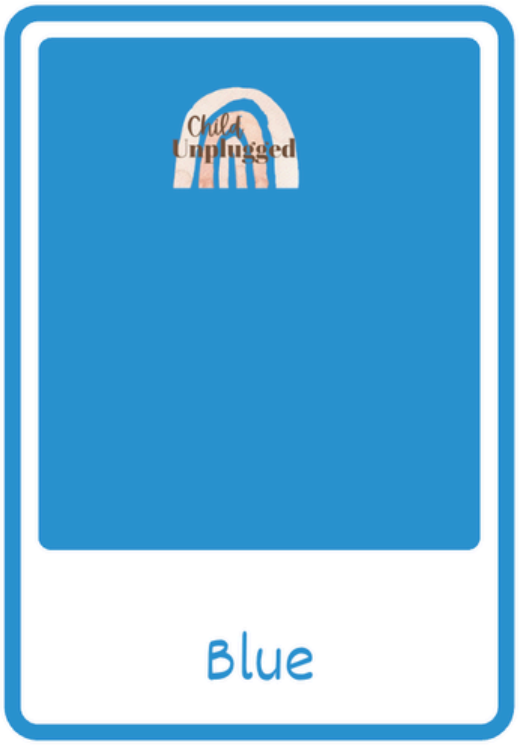
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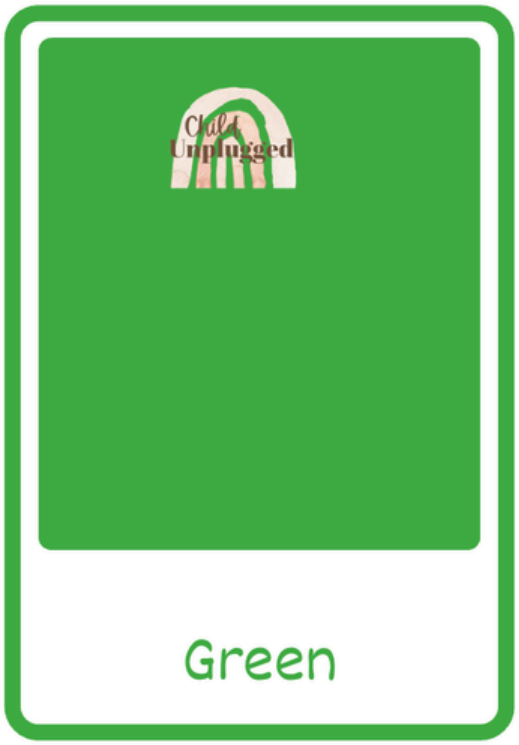
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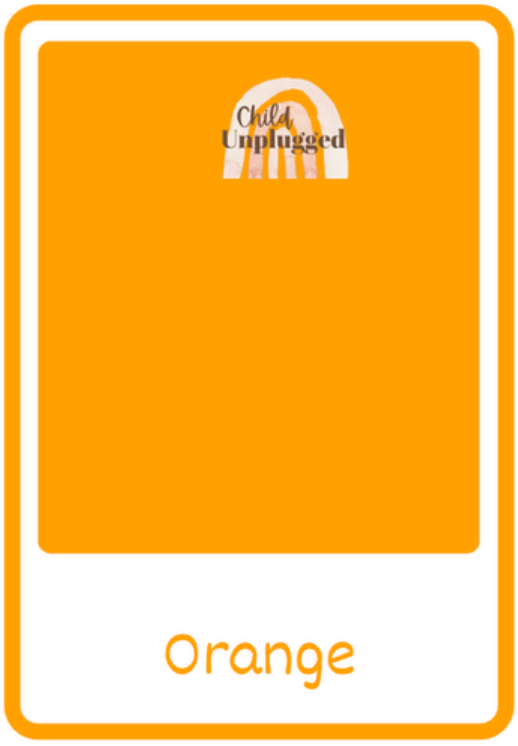
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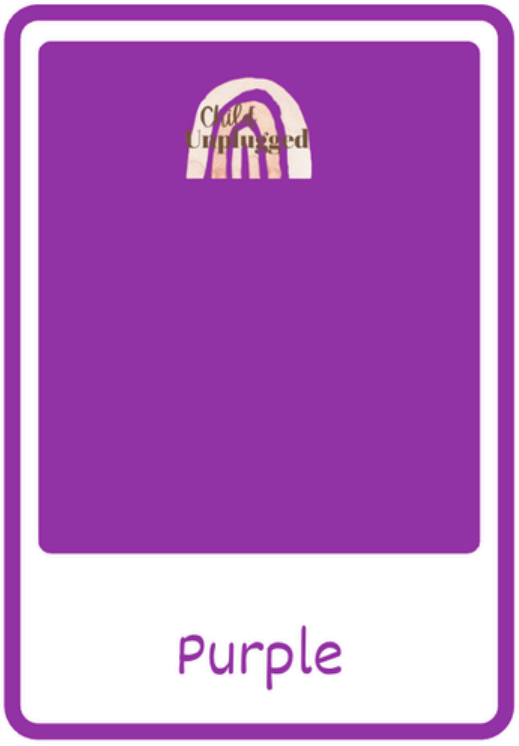
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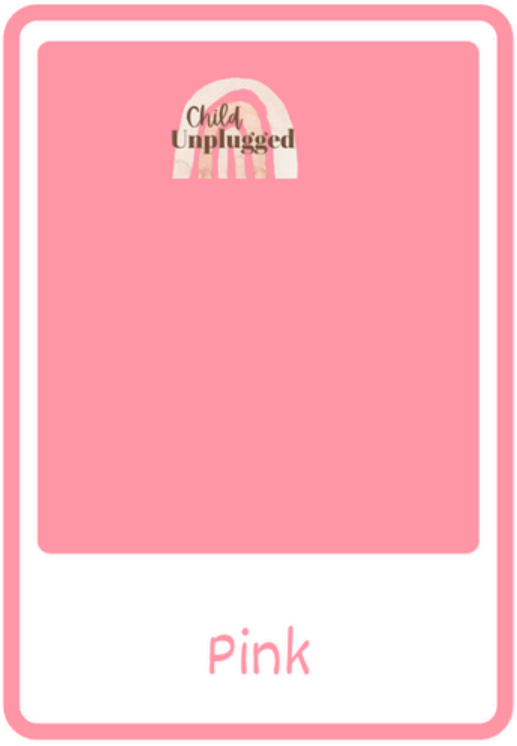
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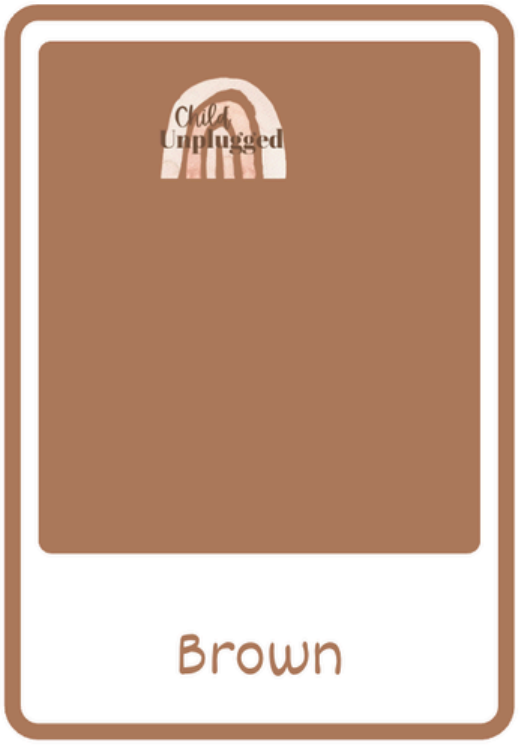
Brown

COLOURS ACTIVITIES

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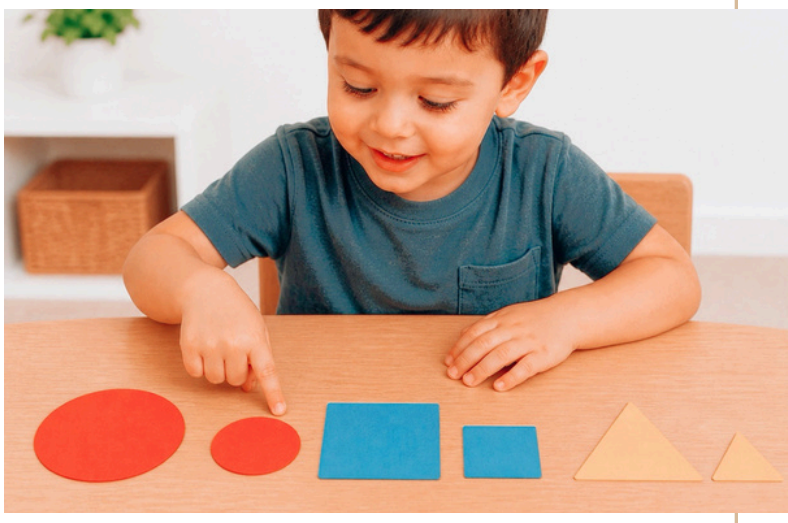





Calm, creative colours & shapes exploration experiences for babies and young children

Using familiar, accessible materials