The Child Unplugged

THE ULTIMATE PLAYDOUGH RECIPE COLLECTION

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

15
Simple Play Ideas



0-12 Months

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Introduction

This Playdough Recipe Book is filled with a variety of playdough recipes that encourage children to explore different textures, scents, colours, and sensory experiences through hands-on play.
Each recipe provides opportunities to strengthen fine motor skills, spark creativity, and encourage imaginative exploration.
Whether rolling, squeezing, moulding, or creating small world scenes, children learn through meaningful play experiences.
By exploring a range of playdough materials, children develop confidence, curiosity, and a love for sensory play while building important skills for lifelong learning.







Why Playdough Is So Valuable

Different playdough recipes help children:

- Develop fine motor skills and hand strength.
- Explore a variety of textures and sensory experiences.
- Encourage creativity and imaginative thinking.
- Build language through describing and comparing materials.
- Support problem-solving and critical thinking.
- Maintain interest and engagement through new experiences.
- Foster curiosity and a love of exploration.

How to Support Play at Home

Create a calm and inviting space where children can explore different types of playdough at their own pace. Encourage creativity, celebrate their ideas, and allow them to experiment freely with textures, tools, and materials.

Basic setup:

- Prepare the playdough and provide simple tools and accessories.
- Use trays, mats, or containers to define the play space.

Simple steps:

- Encourage children to roll, squeeze, pinch, flatten, and shape the dough.
- Talk about the colours, textures, scents, and creations they make.

Helpful tips:

- Introduce different playdough recipes to provide new sensory experiences.
- Add natural materials, loose parts, and toys to extend play.







Ideas

- Create animals, food, letters, numbers, and shapes.
- Build small world scenes using animals, vehicles, and natural materials.

FLOUR DOUGH

WHATS NEEDED:

- 1/4 cup flour
- 1 cup cold water
- Food coloring

WHAT TO DO:

- Mix flour and water in a saucepan.
- Cook on medium heat until it thickens.
- Cool and divide into containers. Add food coloring.

BENEFITS:

- **Sensory Exploration:** Engages sight, touch, and sometimes taste—boosts sensory development.
- **Creative Expression:** Encourages color mixing, painting, and open-ended art.
- **Motor Skills:** Finger painting improves hand-eye coordination and fine motor control.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Color Variety:** Use food coloring or natural dyes (like beet juice, turmeric, or spinach water).
- **Texture Play:** Add oats, rice cereal, or sprinkles for a multi-textured experience.
- **Temperature Play:** Use warm or cool paint to explore temperature differences.
- **Squeeze Bottles:** Thicken slightly and let kids squeeze it out for pre-writing practice.

MARSHMALLOW DOUGH

WHATS NEEDED:

- Marshmallows (large or mini)
- Powdered sugar or cornflour (to prevent sticking)
- Microwave-safe bowl or heat source
- Spoon or spatula
- Optional: food coloring, cookie cutters, rolling pin, safe tools for shaping

WHAT TO DO:

- Place marshmallows in a microwave-safe bowl.
- Heat for 15–30 seconds until soft (not melted completely).
- Add a small amount of powdered sugar or cornflour to make it easier to handle.
- Knead carefully—if sticky, dust hands and surface with more powdered sugar.
- Add a few drops of food coloring if desired and knead until evenly mixed.

BENEFITS:

- Kids explore texture, stickiness, and squishiness.
- Rolling, pinching, and shaping strengthens hands and fingers.
- Kids can mold shapes, pretend foods, or small figures.
- Observing how marshmallows melt and change with heat introduces cause-and-effect.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Edible Sculptures** – Shape letters, numbers, or animals for a learning twist.
- **Themed Play** – Freeze holiday or seasonal colors into the playdough.
- **Add Texture** – Sprinkle in rice, cereal, or glitter (non-toxic) for sensory variety.
- **Mini Playdough Tools** – Cookie cutters, small rolling pins, or plastic knives add more fine motor challenges.

SALT DOUGH

WHATS NEEDED:

- Flour
- Salt
- Water
- Mixing bowl
- Spoon for mixing

Optional Extras

- Rolling pins
- Cookie cutters
- Natural materials for printing patterns
- Paint and paintbrushes
- Loose parts for decorating

WHAT TO DO:

- Mix the flour, salt, and water until a dough forms.
- Knead until smooth.
- Roll, shape, and mould the dough into desired creations.
- Use cutters, stamps, or natural materials to add patterns and details.
- Allow creations to air-dry or bake until hardened.
- Paint and decorate once fully dry.

BENEFITS:

- Develops fine motor skills and hand strength.
- Encourages creativity and self-expression.
- Supports problem-solving and planning skills.
- Promotes concentration and perseverance.
- Provides opportunities for sensory exploration.
- Creates meaningful keepsakes and craft projects.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Create handprints or footprints as keepsakes.
- Make ornaments, decorations, or gift tags.
- Press leaves, flowers, shells, or natural materials into the dough.
- Use letter and number cutters for early literacy and numeracy activities.
- Paint finished creations to extend the activity.
- Incorporate seasonal themes such as holidays, nature, or animals.

CUSTARD DOUGH

WHATS NEEDED:

- Custard powder
- Cornstarch
- Water
- Mixing bowl
- Spoon for mixing

Optional Extras

- Rolling pins
- Playdough cutters
- Loose parts
- Animal figures
- Nature materials
- Food colouring

WHAT TO DO:

- Mix the custard powder and cornstarch in a bowl.
- Gradually add water and stir until a dough forms.
- Knead until smooth and soft.
- Encourage children to roll, pinch, flatten, and shape the dough.
- Add tools and loose parts to extend play opportunities.

BENEFITS:

- Supports sensory exploration through touch and smell.
- Develops fine motor skills and hand strength.
- Encourages creativity and imaginative play.
- Builds language and descriptive vocabulary.
- Promotes concentration and problem-solving.
- Provides a calming and engaging sensory experience.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Add food colouring to create different themed doughs.
- Use animal figures and loose parts for small world play.
- Create letters, numbers, and shapes for early learning activities.
- Add natural materials such as leaves, flowers, or sticks.
- Use cutters and stamps to make patterns and designs.
- Incorporate themed play such as farms, oceans, dinosaurs, or seasonal activities.

PEANUT BUTTER PLAY DOUGH

WHATS NEEDED:

- 1 cup smooth peanut butter
- 2–3 tablespoons honey or maple syrup (optional)
- 1–1½ cups powdered milk

Optional Extras

- Rolling pin & Cookie cutters
- Plastic knives
- Muffin tray
- Bowls
- Stamps

WHAT TO DO:

- Mix peanut butter, powdered milk, and optional honey until a dough forms.
- Knead until smooth.
- Roll, squeeze, pinch, flatten, and shape the dough.
- Use cookie cutters, stamps, or toy tools for added fun.
- Create shapes, letters, numbers, or pretend food.

BENEFITS:

- Strengthens hand and finger muscles.
- Develops fine motor skills and coordination.
- Encourages creativity and imaginative play.
- Provides sensory exploration through texture and smell.
- Supports early math and literacy learning.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use sunflower seed butter or another allergy-friendly spread if needed.
- Add oats for extra texture.
- Include letter stamps or number cutters for learning activities.
- Offer larger tools for younger children.
- Challenge older children to build models, spell words, or create patterns.

CHIA SEED DOUGH

WHATS NEEDED:

- Chia seeds
- Water
- Cornstarch
- Mixing bowl
- Spoon for mixing

Optional Extras

- Rolling pins
- Playdough tools
- Nature items (leaves, sticks, flowers)
- Animal figures
- Loose parts

WHAT TO DO:

- Soak the chia seeds in water until they form a gel-like texture.
- Mix in cornstarch until a dough forms.
- Knead the mixture until well combined.
- Encourage children to squeeze, roll, pinch, and shape the dough.
- Add loose parts or toys to extend play opportunities.

BENEFITS:

- Provides a rich sensory and tactile experience.
- Supports fine motor development and hand strength.
- Encourages creativity and imaginative play.
- Builds language through descriptive exploration.
- Promotes curiosity and scientific thinking.
- Supports focus and concentration.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Add food colouring for themed play.
- Include animal figures for small world play.
- Add natural materials for nature-inspired exploration.
- Use cutters, stamps, and rollers to create patterns and shapes.
- Incorporate counting, sorting, and letter-making activities.
- Create themed setups such as oceans, gardens, or dinosaur worlds.

COFFEE PLAYDOUGH

WHATS NEEDED:

- Flour
- Instant coffee
- Water
- Mixing bowl
- Spoon for mixing

Optional Extras

- Rolling pins
- Playdough cutters
- Natural materials (sticks, leaves, pinecones)
- Animal figures
- Loose parts

WHAT TO DO:

- Mix the flour and instant coffee in a bowl.
- Gradually add water until a dough forms.
- Knead until smooth and easy to shape.
- Encourage children to roll, pinch, flatten, and create with the dough.
- Explore the colour, texture, and aroma during play.

BENEFITS:

- Supports sensory exploration through touch and smell.
- Develops fine motor skills and hand strength.
- Encourages creativity and imaginative play.
- Builds language and descriptive vocabulary.
- Promotes concentration and problem-solving.
- Provides a rich multi-sensory learning experience.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Add natural materials for nature-themed play.
- Create mud kitchens, farm scenes, or small world habitats.
- Use animal figures, vehicles, or loose parts to extend imaginative play.
- Incorporate letter, number, or shape cutters for learning activities.
- Add herbs or spices such as cinnamon for additional sensory experiences.
- Encourage children to create patterns, prints, and sculptures.

AVOCADO DOUGH

WHATS NEEDED:

- Mashed avocado
- Cornstarch
- Mixing bowl
- Spoon for mixing

Optional Extras

- Food colouring
- Rolling pins
- Playdough cutters
- Loose parts
- Animal figures
- Nature materials

WHAT TO DO:

- Mash the avocado until smooth.
- Gradually add cornstarch and mix until a dough forms.
- Knead until soft and easy to handle.
- Encourage children to roll, squeeze, flatten, and shape the dough.
- Add tools and accessories to extend play opportunities.

BENEFITS:

- Provides a taste-safe sensory experience.
- Supports fine motor development and hand strength.
- Encourages creativity and imaginative play.
- Promotes sensory exploration through touch and smell.
- Builds language and communication skills.
- Supports focus, concentration, and problem-solving.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Add food colouring to create different themed doughs.
- Use animal figures for small world play.
- Incorporate letter, number, and shape-making activities.
- Add natural materials such as leaves, flowers, and sticks.
- Create nature, jungle, farm, or dinosaur-themed play setups.
- Use loose parts to encourage pattern-making, sorting, and creative designs.

HERB PLAYDOUGH

WHATS NEEDED:

- Basic flour playdough
- Fresh or dried herbs (rosemary, mint, lavender, etc.)
- Mixing bowl

Optional Extras

- Rolling pins
- Playdough cutters
- Natural materials (leaves, flowers, sticks)
- Loose parts

WHAT TO DO:

- Prepare a basic playdough recipe.
- Mix the herbs into the dough.
- Knead until the herbs are evenly distributed.
- Encourage children to roll, squeeze, pinch, and shape the dough.
- Talk about the different scents, textures, and colours.

BENEFITS:

- Supports sensory exploration through touch and smell.
- Develops fine motor skills and hand strength.
- Encourages creativity and imaginative play.
- Builds language and descriptive vocabulary.
- Promotes focus, concentration, and relaxation.
- Encourages a connection with nature.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use different herbs to explore a variety of scents.
- Add leaves, flowers, and natural materials for nature-themed play.
- Create herbal gardens, fairy gardens, or small world scenes.
- Use cutters and stamps to make patterns and shapes.
- Incorporate counting, sorting, and letter-making activities.
- Combine with outdoor learning and nature walks to collect herbs and materials.

MASHED POTATO DOUGH

WHATS NEEDED:

- 1 cup mashed potatoes (cooled)
- ½–1 cup flour or cornstarch
- Mixing bowl
- Spoon for mixing
- Optional: food coloring

WHAT TO DO:

- Mix the mashed potatoes with flour or cornstarch until a dough forms.
- Knead until smooth and easy to handle.
- Roll, squeeze, pinch, and flatten the dough.
- Use cookie cutters, stamps, or toy tools to create shapes.
- Encourage children to make letters, numbers, patterns, or pretend food.

BENEFITS:

- Strengthens hand and finger muscles.
- Develops fine motor skills and coordination.
- Encourages creativity and imaginative play.
- Provides sensory exploration through touch and smell.
- Supports early math and literacy learning through hands-on activities.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Add food coloring to create different colored doughs.
- Mix in herbs or spices for additional sensory experiences.
- Use letter and number stamps for learning activities.
- Provide larger tools and simple cutters for younger children.
- Challenge older children to build models, create patterns, or spell words.

CLOUD DOUGH

WHATS NEEDED:

- Cornstarch
- Coconut oil
- Mixing bowl
- Spoon for mixing
- Sensory tray or container

Optional Extras

- Scoops and cups
- Moulds and cookie cutters
- Animal figures
- Vehicles
- Natural materials
- Loose parts

WHAT TO DO:

- Mix the cornstarch and coconut oil until a crumbly, mouldable texture forms.
- Place the cloud dough in a sensory tray.
- Encourage children to scoop, pour, squeeze, and mould the dough.
- Use tools, moulds, and loose parts to create shapes and designs.
- Add toys and accessories to inspire imaginative play.

BENEFITS:

- Supports sensory and tactile development.
- Develops fine motor skills and hand strength.
- Encourages creativity and imaginative play.
- Promotes problem-solving and critical thinking.
- Builds concentration and focus.
- Provides a calming sensory experience.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Add food colouring for themed sensory play.
- Include animal figures for habitat and small world play.
- Add construction vehicles for digging and building activities.
- Use natural materials such as leaves, sticks, and stones.
- Hide letters, numbers, or small objects for discovery play.
- Create seasonal, nature, farm, ocean, or dinosaur-themed setups.

TAPIOCA DOUGH

WHATS NEEDED:

- Tapioca starch
- Water
- Mixing bowl
- Spoon for mixing

Optional Extras

- Food colouring
- Rolling pins
- Playdough tools
- Loose parts
- Animal figures
- Nature materials

WHAT TO DO:

- Mix the tapioca starch and water.
- Stir until a dough begins to form.
- Knead until smooth and stretchy.
- Encourage children to stretch, roll, squeeze, and shape the dough.
- Add tools and accessories to extend play opportunities.

BENEFITS:

- Provides a unique sensory experience through its stretchy texture.
- Supports fine motor development and hand strength.
- Encourages creativity and imaginative play.
- Promotes sensory exploration and discovery.
- Builds language and descriptive vocabulary.
- Supports focus, concentration, and problem-solving.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Add food colouring to create themed doughs.
- Use animal figures and loose parts for small world play.
- Incorporate letter, number, and shape-making activities.
- Add natural materials such as leaves, sticks, or flowers.
- Create themed setups such as oceans, jungles, farms, or dinosaur worlds.
- Use cutters, stamps, and rollers to make patterns and designs.

CORNSTARCH AND APPLESAUCE

WHATS NEEDED:

- 1 cup cornstarch
- ½–¾ cup applesauce
- Mixing bowl
- Spoon for mixing

WHAT TO DO:

- Mix the cornstarch and applesauce until a dough forms.
- Knead until smooth and easy to handle.
- Roll, pinch, squeeze, and flatten the dough.
- Use cookie cutters or stamps to create shapes and designs.
- Encourage children to make patterns, letters, numbers, or pretend creations.

BENEFITS:

- Strengthens hand and finger muscles.
- Develops fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.
- Encourages creativity and imaginative play.
- Provides sensory exploration through texture and scent.
- Supports early learning through shape, pattern, and letter activities.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Add cinnamon or pumpkin spice for a seasonal scent.
- Mix in food coloring for colorful dough.
- Use letter and number stamps for literacy and math activities.
- Offer larger tools and simple shape cutters for younger children.
- Challenge older children to create detailed sculptures, patterns, or words.

BANANA DOUGH

WHATS NEEDED:

- Mashed banana
- Cornstarch
- Mixing bowl
- Spoon for mixing

Optional Extras

- Food colouring
- Rolling pins
- Playdough cutters
- Loose parts
- Animal figures
- Nature materials

WHAT TO DO:

- Mash the banana until smooth.
- Gradually mix in cornstarch until a dough forms.
- Knead until soft and easy to manipulate.
- Encourage children to roll, squeeze, flatten, and shape the dough.
- Add tools and accessories to extend play opportunities.

BENEFITS:

- Provides a taste-safe sensory experience.
- Supports fine motor development and hand strength.
- Encourages creativity and imaginative play.
- Promotes sensory exploration through touch and smell.
- Builds language and communication skills.
- Supports concentration and problem-solving.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Add food colouring to create themed doughs.
- Use animal figures for small world play.
- Incorporate letter, number, and shape cutters for learning activities.
- Add natural materials such as leaves, flowers, or sticks.
- Create nature, farm, dinosaur, or ocean-themed play setups.
- Use loose parts to encourage pattern-making and creative designs.

THE PLAYDOUGH RECIPES

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Slow, calm sensory experiences for babies and young children

Using familiar, accessible materials