



Te parāoa pokepoke | Playdough

Playdough is a versatile sensory material that encourages open-ended play and can support children’s creativity, imagination, and fine motor skills. A popular and often calming activity, playdough has a texture that can be very soothing as children focus and explore squeezing, pulling, pinching and rolling the dough.

Different cultures will have different beliefs about using playdough in play because kai is used in the making of it.

Links to Te Whāriki

When tamariki play with playdough they can discover and develop different ways to be creative and expressive (**Communication | Mana reo**). They learn to gain confidence in and control of their own bodies using a range of tools, materials, and equipment and actively explore with all their senses (**Exploration | Mana aotūroa**). Settling to play with playdough can often provide tamariki with a sense of security and a feeling of safety (**Wellbeing | Mana atua**) while beginning to feel comfortable with the routines, customs, and regular events of their playgroup (**Belonging | Mana whenua**). Playdough is often a social activity and offers an opportunity for tamariki to learn with and alongside others.





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Playdough can help tamariki to:

- › explore different textures and sensory experiences to develop their sense of touch and smell
- › make sense of their social world such as pretending to prepare and cook kai
- › experience success as there is no right or wrong way to play
- › be creative and use their imagination to create and problem solve
- › learn about science and maths – preparing, weighing, measuring
- › tell stories, learn and practice language and vocabulary (talk about colours, textures, actions)
- › strengthen their finger and hand muscles, develop fine motor skills, and improve hand-eye coordination.

Adults can support tamariki by:

- › making sure there is clean, fresh playdough available
- › providing a variety of tools and materials to explore shape, size, patterns, and texture
- › asking open-ended questions
- › describing actions using rich language (“You are squishing the playdough, I can see it squeezing through your fingers!”)
- › using te reo Māori words and phrases
- › involving them in making the dough and discussing colour, smell, texture, and what happens when liquids are added
- › sitting at the table with them and having a conversation, singing, and imagining
- › joining in and allowing them to lead the play.

Providing for playdough activity

Child-sized tables and chairs allow tamariki to comfortably spend time with these materials. Dough needs to be soft and easy to work with. By breaking it into different-sized pieces, tamariki can learn to combine different pieces to make different shapes. Playdough works well when it is close to family play equipment and blocks as tamariki often like to role-play with dough. When providing for tamariki who are gluten-intolerant, discuss with parents and consider gluten-free alternatives.

Ideas for equipment

- › tools for cutting, pressing, patterning, and shape-making such as shape cutters, shells, garlic press, cutlery like forks and spoons, twigs, straws, and rolling pins
- › art resources such as beads, buttons, and pipe-cleaners
- › natural resources such as feathers, leaves, sticks, and driftwood, e.g. add flowers or herbs to white playdough to provide for sensory learning
- › cooking utensils such as pots and pans, bowls, measuring cups, cooking trays, or a tea set
- › storytelling props such as animals, fences, dinosaurs, and rocks.