



Reducing the Clean-Up of Messy Play

Have you ever noticed that when a 15-month-old eats spaghetti, the child picks it up with their hands? As the child is attempting to get the spaghetti into their mouth, they smears it all over their face and sometimes in their hair? When the child is finished eating, they smears the remaining spaghetti and sauce all over their high chair tray. Does it go something like that for your little one? Your child doesn't seem to mind getting spaghetti sauce all over them. The truth is children don't, they are learning.

Children are learning how things feel, how things fit together, and what happens when they move the sauce from one place to another. Children enjoy and need messy play to enhance their learning. Through this play, children are learning foundational skills for math and science. As adults, we may want to keep our children from exploring messy play because it takes time to clean up. Here are a few tips on reducing the clean-up of messy play.

- *Cover the area where your child will be playing with the newspaper.*
- *Cover the area where your child will be playing with a cardboard box that is cut to lay flat.*
- *Place the messy item on a large cookie sheet.*
- *Take your child outside to the grass or other safe area.*
- *Place the messy item in a plastic dishpan or plastic container.*



References: Argo Starch. https://www.argostarch.com/Recipe/Homemade_Slime; Perry, B.D. Curiosity: The Fuel of Development. Early Childhood Today 15:6, 22-23 2001