



How to deal with messy play

Playing at all ages can be messy and dirty, whether your child is outside in the mud or inside being creative.

The benefits of messy play

Being messy is a natural part of childhood. It shows your child is creative and interested in learning about the world.

Things that may concern parents

It's natural to worry about germs when your child picks things up from the ground or puts things in their mouths. But it's interesting to hear that some people feel we may have gone too far in our efforts to protect children from germs. Many experts now believe that children's immune systems may be stronger if they are exposed to germs.

Mess or dirty clothes can make extra work for you. But your child will get more out of playing if they feel they don't have to worry about getting messy or dirty.

The important thing is to find the balance that works for your family.

Tips for dealing with messy play

- Keep a supply of old clothes for your child to wear so that you won't mind them getting dirty.
- Let your child know you don't mind them getting wet, muddy or dirty when they play.
- Involve your child in sorting out messy clothes and toys.



There are a few things you can do to stop too much dirt coming indoors:

- Get a good door mat and show your child how to use it.
- Make it a habit for your child to take off their dirty shoes or boots at the door.
- Clean mucky things outside, if possible, rather than bringing them indoors.
- Set up a washing line outside so that muddy or wet clothes, shoes and toys can dry.

There are also things you can do to help you cope with messy play indoors:

- Cover the floor or table with old cloths or newspaper.
- Talk with your child and agree together where it's okay to be messy in your home – and where it isn't.
- Involve your child in cleaning up.
- Accept that spills and mess will sometimes happen.
- Keep a supply of old, adult-sized t-shirts for your child to wear for painting and other messy activities.



For more ideas, visit our website:
www.playfulchildhoods.wales