

Supporting Children with Motor Needs during Art Activities



Accommodations for painting include a variety of sizes and shapes of brushes and tools, as well as numerous devices to assist a child in holding a paintbrush. These range from adaptive tools available for purchase to tools that can be easily made. Positioning should also be considered. It is important to remember to consult and collaborate with services providers (Occupational, Physical, Vision, Behavior) as well as family members.

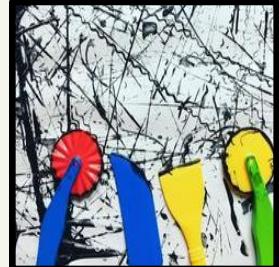


Sponge dish scrubber



Examples: brush holders from household items:
foam inside tissue roll, tennis and Styrofoam balls, and plastic pipe joints.
Other examples show brush holders that are available for purchase and brushes with various sizes and grips of handles.

Unique materials are useful for gaining or maintaining interest in an activity. Some materials such as paint dots and sponge painters might make it easier for some children to initiate a project.



Accommodate children's needs for movement and positioning by encouraging and allowing them to work on their projects in a variety of settings. Examples include horizontal placement of paper so that children are able to stand while painting (including working at an easel), sit on the floor, or stand at a table. Use large pieces of paper so that children can practice large muscle movements.



Accommodations for crayons and markers are similar to those for painting. Examples include a variety of holders, many of which are easily made from common objects and some which are available for purchase. Materials in art and writing centers should include varying sizes, shapes, and grips of crayons and markers.



Short or broken crayons are useful accommodations for children who have difficulty with fine motor finger control and grasp. Some crayons are “effortless” (example below) and require minimal pressure to make a mark.



As with accommodations for painting, many children will require supports during drawing projects to address their needs for movement. Some children require more structured boundaries for their activity in order to organize and remain focused. It is important that the teacher and staff understand and address the goal of the activity and accommodate accordingly. Each child’s levels of participation, enjoyment, and independence should always be considered when determining supports.



Accommodations for glue and scissors are similar to those for painting and drawing. Examples include a variety of sizes and grips. Consult and collaborate with therapists when selecting adaptive scissors and be sure that staff members are trained in the best use of scissors and other adaptive materials.



Colored glue shows up easily on white paper and can help guide a child in placing a small amount. Example: A large triangular glue stick is easier to grasp.

Above: scissors with adaptive handles.

Resources Related to Adapting Activities

Articles:

Teaching Art to People with Disabilities, 5 Art Materials for Child with Special Needs.

<http://artshoptherapy.com/blog/posts/5-art-materials-tips-for-your-special-needs-child/>

Art Lessons for Children with Disabilities, video project from the Kennedy Center,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8PWg8pYST0>

Companies specializing in adaptive materials for purchase:

Beyond Play: <https://www.beyondplay.com/>

Fun and Function: <https://funandfunction.com/>

Learning Resources: <https://www.learningresources.com/category/special+needs.do>

Sites maintained by therapists/professionals:

Top Ten OT Motor Hints for your School-aged Child, <http://childrensupportsolutions.com/top-10-occupational-therapy-tips-for-your-school-aged-child/>

Growing Hands-on Kids, Fine Motor Activities, <https://www.growinghandsonkids.com/fine-motor-activity-ideas-for-2-4-year-olds.html>