

## Carry out these fun and simple activities to explore a selection of materials

Materials can be used to inspire a wide range of exciting play and craft activities. For example, creative skills can be developed by constructing textured collages using a variety of different materials, skills in exploration can be

encouraged through activities focusing on natural and made materials, and manipulative skills can be reinforced while making models using malleable materials such as dough, clay or Plasticine.

### Recycling paper

Encourage your child's awareness of recycling by making papier mâché together. Cover a table with a plastic cloth and put on aprons. Begin by helping your child to tear up five large sheets of newspaper. Soak them for approximately half an hour, then pour off any excess water. Invite your child to add a handful of flour (25g) and join in stirring and squeezing the mixture until it turns into a soft pulp. Encourage your child to model the pulp into an interesting shape or 3-D letter. Leave for approximately one week in a warm place until the model dries out completely. Let your child decorate the model using acrylic or poster paints. When dry, cover the surface in PVA glue to form a clear shiny varnish.

**Top tip:** Encourage your child to give their model as a gift for someone special.



### A supersoft toy

Encourage your child's manipulative skills and imagination by helping them to make a soft toy following the simple instructions on the 'Supersoft toy' photocopiable sheet (see opposite). Cut out two identical shapes, such as two circles, squares, ovals or triangles (approximately A4 or A5 size), from felt or another non-fraying fabric. Sew or glue the edges together, leaving a small gap. Fill with toy stuffing or cotton wool and sew or glue the gap together. Let your child use spare fabric to create fun features such as eyes, nose, mouth and tongue. Use Velcro to attach additional features, such as floppy limbs, big ears or a long tail.

**Top tip:** Invite your child to make up a name for their supersoft toy.

### Book of materials

Encourage your child's observational skills and ability to make comparisons by compiling a 'Book of materials' together. Collect samples of different materials from around the house and garden, for example, paper, plastic, rubber, wood, metal, tissue, fabric, lace, foil, petals, leaves, grass and so on. Tape each sample on to a separate page and use to play a guessing game by taking turns to describe one material for the other person to identify.

**Top tip:** Develop your child's reading and writing skills by helping them to write a simple label for each page.



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### Useful resources

- *The Three Little Pigs* (First Favourite Tales series, Ladybird Books).
- *The Red Woollen Blanket* by Bob Graham (Walker Books).
- *The Non-stop Knotty Knitter* by Ruth Hearson (Orchard Books).
- *Feely Bugs* by David Carter (Orchard Books).