

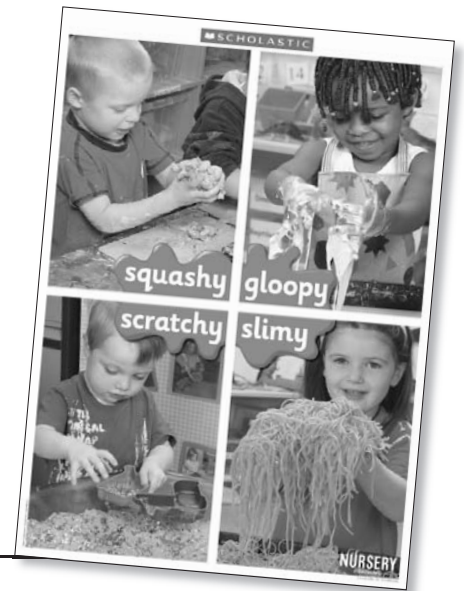
Messy play

Use this stimulating poster to encourage the children to be more adventurous as they investigate the textures of different materials in your creative area

Using the poster

Create a brightly coloured display in the creative area with the poster as a focal point. Surround the poster with mounted photographs of the children engaged in sensory exploration of a range of materials and add explanatory captions to inform parents of possible learning that is taking place.

Record some of the children's comments as they play and print these on to both sides of bubble-shaped coloured card. Print out key words associated with messy play and attach these to foil-covered bubble shapes. Suspend the shapes in front of the display.



Activities across the curriculum

Personal, social and emotional development

- Ask the children which of the messy materials depicted in the poster they would most like to play with. Do they like scratchy, squashy, slimy or gloopy substances best? Do they dislike touching any of them?
- Look at the children handling the materials on the poster images. Discuss the importance of the sense of touch. Can we feel things using different parts of our bodies? Fill a builder's tray with cooked spaghetti, gloop, sand or clay and invite the children to sit on chairs around it and put their feet into it. Encourage them to talk about how the substance feels between their toes and under their feet.

Communication, language and literacy

- Read the word linked to each poster image. Invite the children to think of alternative words, for example, 'squishy', 'gritty', 'slippy' or 'drippy'. Encourage them to verbalise their feelings and use a widening vocabulary to describe the textures they handle.
- Look at the squashy clay image. Talk about the similarities between clay and play dough. Show the children a pictorial recipe for making play dough and follow it together, drawing attention to the information conveyed in the print and illustrations.

Mathematical development

- Talk about what happens to the clay as the child handles it in the 'squashy' picture. Provide the children with clay or play dough and encourage them to make 3D 'balls' and 'tubes'. Can they change them into 2D 'plates' and 'ribbons' by squashing them? Use correct mathematical vocabulary to describe the shapes.
- Look at the image of the child handling spaghetti. Encourage the children to explore cooked and uncooked spaghetti strands. Can they make a wavy line from an uncooked strand? How can they make a strand shorter?

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- Look at and talk about the squashy clay image. Provide the children with a quantity of clay to investigate. How does the clay behave? Read the other messy words on the poster and try to change the clay texture so that it becomes 'scratchy', 'slimy' or 'gloopy', by adding small twigs, spreading water over the surface or mixing it with greater quantities of water.
- Examine the scratchy sand image. What has been added to make it feel scratchy? Add some of these items to smooth silver sand. Does it still feel smooth? Provide a selection of sieves with different-sized holes for the children to experiment removing the items.

Physical development

- Look at the image of the child handling the clay. Invite a small group of children to try to copy the way that the clay is squished through fingers. Is it easy to remove from their fingers by pinching or rubbing? Suggest that they create a clay tower. Is it easier to pile it up in one lump or make separate blocks of clay to stack on top of one another?
- Invite the children to consider the mixture in the 'gloopy' image. Will it be wet or dry, runny or stiff? Create some gloop by mixing cornflour and water to create a thick, creamy consistency. Pour the mixture on to a washable surface and encourage the children to discover the answers to these questions for themselves.

Creative development

- Look the slimy spaghetti image. Mix cooked strands of spaghetti with a little water to stop it sticking together, and let the children explore the slimy mixture. For added excitement, introduce red food colouring when cooking the spaghetti to create pink 'worms'.
- Look at the 'scratchy' mixture on the poster. Help the children to create scratchy pictures by covering sheets of card in a thick layer of PVA glue and sprinkling on scratchy materials.

Jean Evans is an early years consultant and author.

