

OT Tip of the Month Preschool and School-age Art

Do you know children that...

1. Avoid “messy” or “smelly” art materials?
2. Hold tools like scissors, paint brush or crayon awkwardly?
3. Do not finish their projects as fast as others?

These children might have sensory and/or motor struggles. They may be defensive to the feeling or smell of art materials, eliciting an aversive reaction such as pulling away or refusal to engage. Their grasp may be inefficient causing them to hook their fingers or grasp too hard as a way to compensate for lack of stability in their hands. They may have motor planning difficulties that impact organization of the steps of a task.

Sensational ideas for art ...

1. Provide gloves or a brush to allow for artistic experience without the mess. Have a damp towel handy to wipe hands if needed.
2. Some aversive smells can sometimes be masked by chewing gum. Consider using paints and materials with decreased odor.
3. Explore different types of scissors or brushes to determine the best fit for the child’s particular grasp pattern.
4. Give the child a visual model or write out the steps of the project to check off as completed. Sometimes cues are helpful such as “FIRST _____ THEN _____”. For example “first cut, then glue”.
5. Sometimes it is hard to just start a project. Help the child start, maybe even doing the first step with them and then letting them finish.

Go to: <http://therapystreetforkids.com/index> for more ideas to develop fine motor skills needed for art center.

[Click here](http://www.cintiOTinstitute.com/tipofthemonth) for more tip sheets for preschool and school age classrooms at www.cintiOTinstitute.com/tipofthemonth . For information about occupational therapy services at COTI go to www.cintiOTinstitute.com.

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