

To meet minimal safety standards, make sure all art materials state they are non-toxic **AND** conform to ASTM D-4236. To meet the highest safety standards, make sure all art materials state they are certified by the Art and Creative Materials Institute (ACMI) and have the “AP” (Approved Product) seal. For additional information, see the ACMI online at www.acminet.org.

Along with using safe art supplies, supervision is very important when doing any type of art activity. Caregivers need to closely watch children to make sure that they are using equipment and supplies correctly and safely. It is also important for caregivers to take in account each individual child’s development and maturity when choosing suitable art activities.

Be cautious when accepting donations unless the products are relatively new and all the ingredients are known. The older the material, the more likely it is to contain harmful substances. All products should be in the original container. If you do not have the original container or if you aren’t sure a product is safe, it is best to throw it away.

Some early childhood experts believe that food should not be used for art. It can give children a misleading message about the proper use of food. If you choose to use food, it is recommended not to present it as food. For example, put the Cool Whip in another container and present it as a material for art; do not point out that it is Cool Whip. Ensuring sanitary conditions is very important if food is used for art. The food should be handled in a sanitary manner, it should be safe to eat (stored properly and current freshness date), and children’s hands should be washed and tables sanitized in case the children do eat the food.

AVOID	USE
Powdered clay, which is harmful to the lungs and can get into children’s eyes.	Pre-mixed clay.
Adhesives not water-based, such as rubber cement or solvent-based glue.	White glue, which is the safest for children.
Glazes, paints, or finishes that contain lead.	Poster paints/water-based products.
Paints that require solvents, such as turpentine, to clean brushes.	Water-based paints for easier safer clean-up.
Cold-water or commercial dyes that contain chemical additives.	Natural dyes such as vegetables or onion skins.

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Permanent markers that may contain toxic solvents.	Water-based markers. Washable markers better choice.
Instant paper-mache that may contain lead or asbestos, and use of color-print newspaper or magazines with water.	Newspaper (black ink only) and white paste.
Aerosol sprays. The fumes can be harmful.	Pump sprays.
Powdered tempera paints. Powdered paints can get into children's lungs or eyes.	Pre-mixed liquid tempera paint.
Shaving cream with infants and toddlers. Ingesting shaving cream may make a child sick or contact could irritate their sensitive skin. Recommended to use in a well ventilated area due to fumes; special consideration should be given if using with children who have allergies or asthma.	
Uncooked beans (ex. kidney, pinto, etc.) for projects and in sensory tables. Uncooked kidney beans are toxic. Eating as few as 4-5 beans can be harmful. Raw beans are also a small object hazard for young children. If a bean is put into a body opening, the bean may get stuck, swell and become difficult to remove.	
Glitter with infants and toddlers. If glitter is used with older children, it is important to be aware that glitter may cause an eye injury if children rub some into their eyes.	
Peanut butter or nuts for art projects with infants or toddlers or if there is a child in the class that is allergic to peanuts.	Sunbutter.
Possible choking hazards small eyes, Styrofoam packing peanuts, foam pieces, beads, etc. with infants and toddlers. These items should only be used with older children.	

Sources: Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, revised edition, 2003
 Early Childhood Health Link, Volume 14: Issue 4, Fall 2003
 Healthy Young Children, revised edition, 2002
 All About the ITERS-R, 2004
 Healthy Child Care, Volume 8 Issue 2, February-March, 2005
 MN Poison Control Center

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