

The Origin of Play-Doh

Way back in the 1930s, soap manufacturer Kutol Products created a substance that looked like putty out of flour, water, salt, boric acid and mineral oil. It was used to clean coal residue from wallpaper. Following World War II, with the change from coal to natural gas in most homes and the resulting decrease in soot on wallpaper, the market for wallpaper cleaning putty dropped. The company was near bankruptcy when a nursery school teacher suggested selling the product as putty for children. The rest is play time history!

You can make your own play dough with these simple recipes.

Silky-Smooth Play Dough

2 cups cornstarch

About 1 cup hair conditioner or lotion (don't use the expensive stuff, but something that is either scent-free or a scent that you like is preferred)

1. Place the cornstarch in a large bowl.
2. Mix in the beauty product of your choice with your hands--it will just start coming together and it will be pliable and very smooth.
3. You may need to add more conditioner/lotion as you go. Use food coloring to color as desired.
4. Keep covered when not in use.

Homemade Play Dough Recipe

1 cup of flour (whatever kind you have on hand)

¼ cup of salt

½ cup of water

3 to 5 drops of food coloring

1. Mix together the flour and the salt.
2. Mix together ½ cup of warm water with a few drops of food coloring.
3. Slowly pour the water into the flour mixture, stirring as you pour. Stir until combined, then knead with your hands until the flour is completely absorbed. If the dough is too sticky, add more flour until it doesn't stick at all.
4. Keep covered when not in use.

The Origin of Silly Putty

During World War II, engineer James Wright was trying to create an inexpensive substitute for synthetic rubber. When he dropped boric acid into silicone oil, he got a substance that was stretchier and bouncier than rubber. The government didn't want it, but he later renamed it "Silly Putty" and marketed it as a toy.

You can use white school glue, clear glue, or glitter glue in both recipes. You can also add a few drops of food coloring to the glue before adding other ingredients. Keep covered when not in use.

Silly Putty Recipe (Borax)

4 oz glue

4 oz water

1 tsp Borax

4 additional oz of warm water (this is used to dissolve the borax)

1. Mix glue and water. Stir until completely mixed.
2. Dissolve 1 tsp of borax into the 4 oz (1/2 cup) warm water. Pour borax water into the glue mixture and stir.
3. Keep stirring, after a few seconds the glue will begin to "gel" up.
4. Pick up the glue glob and squish it around for a few moments with your hands. Over the sink is a good idea as it will drip excess liquid.

Silly Putty Recipe (Liquid Starch)

4 oz glue

4 oz Sta-Flo concentrated liquid starch

Food coloring (optional)

1. Pour the liquid starch into the colored glue mixture.
2. Stir and let it sit for five minutes.
5. Pull the putty out of the mixing bowl and knead the putty in your hands for five to ten minutes. Over the sink is a good idea as it will drip excess liquid.

Lava Bottle

Water

Cooking or mineral oil

Food coloring

Clear plastic bottle (soda or water bottles work well)

Funnel

Glitter (optional)

1. Fill approximately 1/3 of your bottle with water.
2. Add drops of food coloring and swirl to mix. Optional: add glitter.
3. Fill bottle the rest of the way with oil.

Maze Box

Shallow cardboard box

Paper towel or toilet paper rolls

Ping pong ball (or large marble)

Scissors and/or an Exacto knife (you may need an adult to help)

Tape and/or glue

Marker

Create a maze by using rolls taped or glued inside the box. Cut out a hole as a “hazard” for the ball to drop out of the maze. Draw the course of the maze and see if you can follow the path.

Tip: Layout your maze pieces and make sure the ball will roll through the way you want before cutting the box or gluing or taping pieces in place.

Lily Pad Game

Paper

Socks (clean ones!)

Our lily pads are just clip art found online and printed on green paper, but if you don't have access to a printer, you can simply use pieces of paper and have kids draw their own lily pads.

Tie the socks into a simple knot, and they're now your “frogs” to land on the lily pads. You can keep score if you want.

Bean Bag Toss

Socks (clean ones!)

Cardboard boxes or something similar to use as targets

Beans

Put a small amount of beans into a sock. You seal with a knot, and use yarn for extra strength. If you have a sewing machine, you can sew them shut to make longer lasting bags.

Assign targets different points based on size and/or difficulty and keep score.

Spoon to Spoon

Ping pong balls

Spoons

Pass ball spoon to spoon. If the ball falls, the round must be started again at the beginning.

Goal Shoot

Ping pong balls

Plastic bowls or small cardboard boxes

Take aim! Which team can shoot the most goals?

Puff

Ping pong balls

Straws

Use a straw to blow a ball across a table. How fast are you?