

Report to PARENTS

Encourage Your Child's Creativity to Flourish

Creativity has been called a key 21st century skill. That means it—along with skills like communication and critical thinking—will help students navigate the increasingly collaborative and information-rich world that awaits them once they leave school. The arts have been shown to boost students' academic performance, perseverance, self-confidence, and more. Here are strategies for supporting your child's creativity.

Take stock of your toys. Flashy electronic toys are fun, but they don't offer children opportunities for open-ended, imaginative play. Make sure to have basic art supplies—paper, crayons, glue, clay—at home, along with toys like building blocks, puzzles, or costumes for dress-up.

Cut the screen time. Set limits on TV and iPad time. Try designating a certain time during the week when your entire family will put down cell phones and work on a creative project.

Embrace mistakes. Children who are afraid of failure are less likely to think creatively. Teach your child that mistakes are opportunities for growth. Ask, "What could you do differently next time?" Be patient with your child—and model patience as he or she learns new skills or tries a new project.

Encourage curiosity. Don't squelch kids' natural curiosity by being frustrated when your child asks lots of questions. Embrace it! Ask, "What if" questions, and encourage your child to use his or her imagination.

Offer constructive praise... Too much praise can make a child "hooked" on success. Instead of offering general praise ("You're so smart!"), offer specific feedback that praises your child's effort or the process he or she used ("You found a great way to paint that scene," or "I can tell you've been practicing.") Offer non-verbal praise (a hug



or a thumbs-up), or implicit encouragement by displaying your child's work on the refrigerator.

...but step back sometimes. If a child feels constantly watched, he or she may be less likely to try new ideas. Give your child space to play on his or her own. Wait until your child is finished drawing to ask what he or she has made.

Look for community resources. Check your local library, museum, or community center for art classes or workshops to try new creative skills. Keep an eye out for poster or story contests offered by community organizations, too. Or, try teaming up with a neighbor or friend to host an art playdate. Some projects can be time-consuming or expensive, but working together with other families can help ease the burden.

Web Resources

Visit Crayola's **Creative Parenting Web page** for activities and tips to spark creativity at home.
bit.ly/creativeparenting

The **Tinkerlab** offers dozens of hands-on art, science, writing, and craft ideas for families to try.
tinkerlab.com/

At **The Artful Parent** blog, explore interviews with children's art experts along with lists of the best supplies.
artfulparent.com/