

DOUGH

Dough is a thick malleable, elastic paste used in Early Years settings as a modelling material. Making dough supports children to learn about the properties of materials, to make predictions and test ideas through trial and error.

Playing with open-ended materials, such as dough, provides opportunities for children to express their ideas in both 2 and 3 dimensions. This enables them to make connections with the world around them as they express themselves and create representations of their experiences.

Dough differs from clay in that it is an easily manipulated material. Given its potential variation in texture and consistency, it can support children to engage in a broad range of sensory experiences.

It's important to ensure that there are daily opportunities for children to make dough, both independently and with adult support.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

Manipulating dough through pinching, pulling, twisting and squeezing supports children's fine-motor development.

The shoulder and core strength required to press, pound and roll dough promotes gross-motor development.

Playing with dough can be a therapeutic, calming experience for children, helping them to work through their emotions. As a result, it can be a useful de-escalation strategy.



Literacy

Throughout the dough-making process, children can engage with text in meaningful ways as they read and follow instructions and recipes.

Whilst creating with dough, children can make marks, form letter shapes and explore patterns of writing.

Due to dough's malleable properties, it can support development of children's muscles and dexterity, contributing towards pre-writing skills.



Maths & Numeracy

Following recipes and instructions to make dough enhances awareness of measure, volume and number. Information handling is explored through engaging with signs and symbols.

Playing with dough can support understanding of sharing, progressing to the concept of 'fair share.'

Dough supports exploration of mathematical concepts, such as addition, subtraction, fractions, estimation, measuring and comparison (longer, shorter, wider, thinner, more or less).



Other

Children can investigate ways that different substances react to and with one another. For example, the way that water combines with flour to create a new substance. In order to achieve a useable consistency, children must engage in trial and error, prediction, evaluation and analysis.

Dough affords children the freedom to explore, discover and choose the way that they create, inspired by a range of stimuli and their own experiences.



ROLE OF THE ADULT

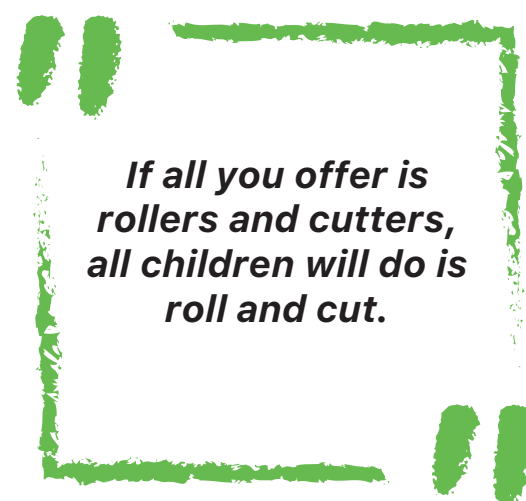
Practitioners should ensure that dough is freshly made every day. This should be child-led with adults providing support where required. The focus of dough making should be the process rather than the end-result.

Given the sensory nature of dough-making, practitioners should remain flexible in approach, realising that whilst some children will wish to make dough that feels warm and dry, capable of being moulded, other children may be interested in creating a messier gloop with flour and water.

Children should be supported to follow dough-making sequences and to understand picture, word and number-based instructions, including signs and symbols.

Fife Council settings should follow the most up-to-date local authority guidance surrounding the provision of dough. Funded providers should adhere to national guidance and their setting's health and safety policy.

Practitioners should resource the area to encourage creative, imaginative, open-ended play. Remember that prescriptive resources limit children's opportunities for exploration and self-expression.



ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

The dough area should be located in a space where the floor is easy to clean.

Children should have enough space and a robust enough surface to actively engage in the creative process and practise gross-motor movements, such as pressing, pounding and rolling.

Sometimes, the dough-making process can take place in a smaller, separate area. Children can then move to a larger space to be creative.



RESOURCE IDEAS



Dough ingredients: flour & water in small containers. Recipe ingredients

Measuring tools: measuring spoons & cups

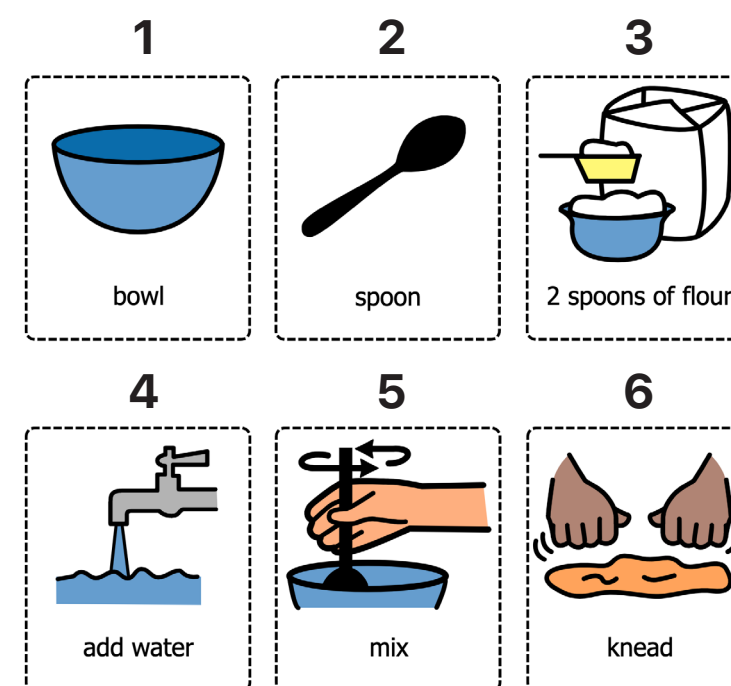
Herbs & spices

Loose parts: natural materials, shells, conkers, flowers, pine cones, corks

Cloth to wipe the table

Mark-making tools: knives, forks, mashers, rolling-pins, plain/textured buttons

Dough-making instructions: photos, numbers, words, symbols



REFLECTION POINTS

- To what extent do practitioners genuinely value the process of dough-making? Is it recognised for its own rich learning opportunities, such as the potential to experiment, investigate and problem-solve? Or, is it simply viewed as a procedure to create a piece of dough?
- Whilst dough should remain natural in colour, how can practitioners use natural materials to extend and support children's creativity? Consider the addition of herbs and spices to the dough area for children to experiment with.