

“Drip Painting for Children”

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Chicago Parent, September, 2007

Jackson Pollock's first drip paintings were compared to baked macaroni by art critic Howard Devree. Still, Pollock kept going and soon the entire art world was singing his praises. Personally, we think he made so many drip paintings because they were so much fun to make.

Drip paintings are a wonderful way for children to paint because it lets them see how the paint flows, how the viscosity of the paint affects its appearance on paper and they love to see the different paints run together to make new colors. And really, there is no way to "mess it up"; there are no lines to go outside of, no rules -- just color, movement and fun!

To get your Pollock groove on with your children, you'll need to get your supplies together. For this project you'll need:

- acrylic craft paints
- pipe cleaners
- an art smock or old T-shirt
- watercolor paper, or any heavy paper
- a few toothpicks
- some paint brushes (optional)
- and some cups or a paint tray to hold the paints.

We love using inexpensive acrylics from the local craft store. For starters, they are more fluid than regular acrylics. Plus, they come in a world of colors and did we mention, they are cheap? Most craft store acrylics are about \$1.50 or less.

Children love being part of the entire process when it comes to -- well, everything -- so have them pour the paint into the cups or paint tray. Once you have your paint in its respective cup, do a test drip on a scrap of paper. Dip a pipe cleaner into the paint, swirl it around a bit and then hold it over your paper. If the paint doesn't drip right away, even with some light flicking, it is too thick. Thin it out with a little bit of water and stir it with a pipe cleaner. Once the paint flows freely from the pipe cleaner, your child is ready to go.

Find a comfortable spot on a table or floor and grab one sheet of water color paper for you and one for your child. We recommend you child wear a smock or an old T-shirt, but it isn't necessary. Just be warned that your work surface will get messy, but try not to think about it while you are working. Relax and have fun!

When you are about to begin, you can show your child (on your sheet of paper) what you are going to do and explain it to them while you are doing it. For instance, "I'm going to paint on my paper but I'm going to let my paint drip onto my paper." Swirl a pipe cleaner above the paper

and then tap it, or move it around, the paint will splatter. And then, let them do it on their sheet. They might shy about the project at first, but soon they will be splattering and dripping and experimenting with different colors. Remember, things will get messy but you can always clean up together when you're done. Enjoy the moment.

Once your child has some nice, big fat drops on his or her sheet, show them how they can run a toothpick through the drops to create some thin lines. As your child adds more and more splatters of paint, ask them if they can see anything in their painting. As my son was working on his piece, he excitedly exclaimed, "Look! A snake! And I see a big circle with little circles. I see blue color inside my red color."

The point of this project isn't to tell children how to paint, or to let them infer there is a right or wrong way to do it. The point is to let explore with paint and feel confident and happy with their results. If they begin using pipe cleaners as a paint brush, that's O.K. If they begin to use their fingers, that's wonderful. As Pollock himself said about his work, "...there is no accident."

Happy painting!