
GLORIOUS GLOP



Photo by Bernard Hermant on Unsplash

**Save money & delight your kids with
homemade art supplies, untidy science experiments,
and other messy fun activities**

from the Parent Powerline

by Becky Cerling Powers

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Photo by Hannah Tasker on Unsplash

Our children’s Great-Aunt Ida remembered the day her mom caught her cracking a fresh egg into a pile of dirt. This was back on the family farm in the early 1900s.

“Ida, is that how you’ve been making your mud pies?” her mother demanded.

Ida nodded. She hadn’t realized she was being bad when she helped herself to the eggs in the hen house for her mud pie projects. Mother used the hen house eggs when *she* cooked or baked. Meanwhile, her mother had been wondering why the hens were producing such a skimpy supply of eggs.

Kids haven’t changed since Great Aunt Ida’s day:

Is it gooey?

Is it gloppy?

Does it make a luscious mess?

Can you squeeze it?

Mash it?

Mold it?

If your answer is yes....

Kids will love it.

Here are a few basic recipes for various forms of glorious glop. Some of the projects are best taken outside to reduce clean up afterwards. The rest should probably be restricted to the kitchen, bathroom or work room – some place without a carpet.



Photo by Honey Fangs on Unsplash

Goopy Play Materials

Shaving cream goo

Squirt a little shaving cream into a zip lock bag and fasten it shut, making sure no air is trapped inside. Let children squish it. Try adding a couple drops of yellow and blue food coloring to let children see how yellow and blue make green. This is a good activity for the bathtub.

Shaving cream body art

Shaving cream has a luscious velvety feel. Let kids spread it on their arms and legs or give themselves moustaches and beards in the bathtub. Or let them play shaving cream monster in the back yard and hose them off at the end of the game.



Rainbow Play Dough Photo by Julietta Watson on Unsplash

Favorite homemade play dough

Mix 1 cup flour, ½ cup salt, 2 teaspoons cream of tartar, 1 cup water, 2 tablespoons salad or baby oil and food coloring in a saucepan. Stir constantly over medium heat until the dough leaves the sides of the pan. Cool it, knead it, and give it to your kids to play with it. Store in an airtight container, like a ziplock bag sealed shut. This favorite of preschoolers can be used over and over for a long time if it's not left out to dry after children play with it.



Castle Photo by Franco Antonio Giovanella



Peanut Butter Boy Photo by Parent Powerline

Edible play clay

In a large bowl, mix together a container of store-bought frosting, 2 cups confectioners' sugar, and 1 cup peanut butter. Knead it, mold it into a fun shape, and eat it when you're done.

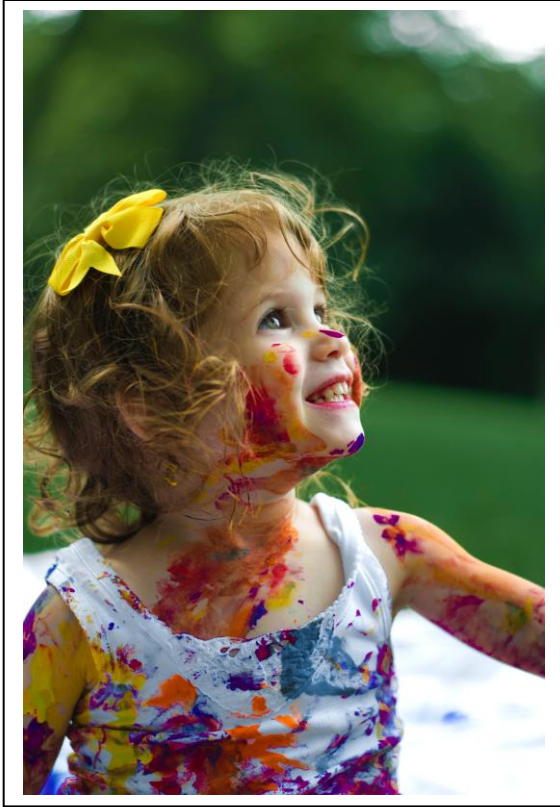
Goofy putty

Pour $\frac{1}{4}$ cup PVA glue (purchased at specialty or woodworking supply stores) into a disposable cup. Stir in 1 teaspoon hand lotion, a drop of food coloring, and a drop of glycerin (from any drugstore). In a large bowl make a separate solution of borax and warm water by adding borax to the water until about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the borax remains undissolved in the bottom of the bowl. Stir $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of this highly saturated solution into the glue mixture (use a stirring utensil you can throw away).

Keep stirring until the putty becomes stringy. Then stir in another $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of borax solution. The putty will begin to form a soft mass that you can squeeze in your hands (still in the cup). Keep working with this soft stuff until you can form it into a ball. When that happens, you can remove it from the solution to play with. You can make it bounce or flatten it onto a comic strip to pick up an imprint.

Easy goofy putty

To make a simpler (but less effective) version of goofy putty, pour a tablespoon of Sta-Flo liquid starch into a container. Drop in a tablespoon of Elmer's white glue. Keep folding the starch over the blob of glue. When the glue loses its stickiness, you can stretch it and play with it.



Homemade Art Supplies

Homemade paint

Put on an apron or an old tee shirt and mix together one teaspoon water, one teaspoon dish washing liquid, and ½ teaspoon of food coloring for vibrant, homemade paint.

Edible finger paint

Mix vanilla instant pudding according to directions and spoon it into two or three bowls. OR use vanilla yogurt or plain yogurt. Color each portion with a few drops of food coloring. Use as finger paints on shelf paper with toddlers and preschoolers.

[Painted Lady Photo by Senjuti Kundu on Unsplash](#)



[Eager Eater Photo by Jelleke Vanooteghem on Unsplash](#)



Fingerpaint & Toothbrush Photo by Tanaphong Tooehinda on Unsplash

Homemade finger paint, recipe #1

Boil 6 cups of water in a saucepan and take it from the heat. Mix 2 cups of cornstarch into a little cool water, and then add that to the boiled water, stirring constantly. (A wire whisk will make the job of stirring cornstarch into water a lot easier.) Place the saucepan back on the burner and boil the mixture for 1-2 minutes until it is thick and clear. Keep adding liquid or powdered tempera paint until you get the color you want. Use this paint on heavy paper.

Homemade finger paint, recipe #2

You mix this finger paint right on the paper. Moisten construction paper (or similar heavy paper) with a damp rag until the surface is slippery. Pour a small pool of liquid starch (about 1 tablespoon) onto the paper and add a little powdered or liquid tempera paint to the pool. Let children spread the pool around with their fingers. They can add texture to their pictures with coffee grounds, salt, sugar, sand, glitter or talcum powder.

Homemade scratch 'n sniff

Add perfume, essential oils, or a spice (like cinnamon, for example) to finger paint recipe #2



Photo by Kanwardeep Kaur on Unsplash

Simple flour & water homemade paste

Stir together $\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water until smooth. For longer-lasting paste, add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour to one cup of boiling water and stir over low heat until paste is thick and shiny. Use this to make scrapbooks, collages, mosaics, and scenes from cutout pictures.

Corn starch & syrup homemade paste

Stir together $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water, 2 tablespoons corn syrup, and 1 teaspoon vinegar in a pan. Heat the liquid until it boils rapidly. Stir 2 tablespoons of corn starch and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cold water in a cup or small bowl. When it's smooth with no lumps, stir it gradually into the boiling liquid mixture in the pan until it is boiling again. Boil and stir it for 1 minute. Let it cool. Keep it in a container with a lid.



Photo by Elena Kloppenburg on Unsplash

Homemade salt glitter

Add six drops of food coloring to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup salt and stir well. Then spread it on wax paper to air dry or cook it in the microwave for a minute or two. Store it in an airtight container and use it like glitter to sprinkle over glue or paste designs.

Homemade stickers and stamps

In a saucer mix two teaspoons Elmer's school (non-toxic) with one teaspoon white vinegar. With a small brush, paint this mixture onto the back of children's art work, old stamps or small pictures cut from magazines. Make sure to get the edges or else paint the backs before cutting. Allow the homemade stickers to dry completely, painted side up. Then lick and stick.

Large size contact paper stickers

You can also make stickers of any size, from small to giant, using clear contact paper. But this is definitely an activity requiring close supervision of the youngest artists because you need to use permanent markers to draw on the contact paper. Be sure to protect your working surface with an old plastic tablecloth or lots of layers of newspaper. Let children draw and decorate their figures on the slick side of the contact paper (maybe a house, a tree, some flowers). Cut around the figures and arrange them the way you want them on colored construction paper. You don't need to worry about cutting exactly along the outline because the clear contact will blend in to your background. Remove the protective backing and stick on the drawings wherever you want them. Then add finishing touches, if desired, with markers. (And be sure to sign your work!)



Photo by Tanaphong Toochinda on Unsplash

Salt dough

Combine 1 cup salt, 2 cups flour, and 1 cup water. Knead 8-10 minutes and then mold into fat beads, letters, people, animals—whatever you like. You can also roll this dough out flat to cut into shapes with cookie cutters. Cook at 325 degrees for 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the thickness of your creations.

You can color small amounts of the dough with food coloring before baking, or children can paint their creations with poster paint after they are baked. To make a car, toothpick axles at the front and back of the car body before baking, then bake the wheels separately and glue them onto the axles after cooking.



Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

Cornstarch clay

Mix 1 cup cornstarch with 2 cups baking soda and 1¼ cups water. Stir over medium heat until the mixture has the consistency of moist mashed potatoes (10-15 minutes). Remove from heat and cover pan with a damp cloth until the clay is cool enough to knead. After molding your masterpieces, dry them at room temperature for 3 days. Store leftovers in a Ziplock bag.

Baker's clay: Combine 1 cup salt, 1 cup flour and just enough water until the substance feels like modeling clay. Roll out a slab of clay and cut it into pieces that you can work with your fingers. Bake in a 200 degree oven until very hard. Depending on the thickness of your creations, baking time can be anywhere from 5 minutes to an hour.

Gukky goop

Add about ¼ cup water to 1 cup of cornstarch. Work it in your hands until all the cornstarch is wet through and there is no water left on the surface. If the cornstarch seems too dry, add more water, a teaspoon at a time.

Children are fascinated with the strange way this substance feels and behaves. As long as they keep working it with their hands, it stays together. Let it go though, and it falls apart into something oozy enough to drip through a strainer. This is fun to play with using spoons, funnels and other kitchen utensils. Add drops of different colored food coloring and swirl around to make interesting effects.

Projects for salt dough, baker's clay or cornstarch clay



Photo by Joyce Panda on Unsplash

To make the following projects, you can color small amounts of the dough with food coloring before baking or drying them, or children can paint their creations with poster paint after they are baked.



Photo by Annie Spratt on Unsplash

Ornaments

For easy flat ornaments, roll dough out flat and use cookie cutters to make shapes. Or you can design your own cardboard patterns and cut around them with a knife. For more complicated ornaments, sculpt your own art pieces: Christmas trees, Santas, angels, etc. You will need to hang your ornaments after they are dried and painted, so before you cook or dry your creations, be sure to poke a hole in the top of the ornament so you can run a piece of yarn or thread through it later.



Photo by Tong Nguyen Van on Unsplash

Necklaces and bracelets

Roll fat balls between your palms and poke a hole through each one to make beads. After they dry or cook, you can string them to make a necklace or bracelet. Shellacking your beads after you paint them gives them a nice finish. To make a pendant necklace, fashion or cut out a flat shape the same way you would make a flat ornament. Then poke two holes in the top instead of one, so your pendant will lie flat as a necklace.

Earrings and pins

To make play earrings, string a flat ornament or a few beads on a piece of yarn and loop it over your child's whole ear. It hangs down like a big earring, but the entire ear holds up the weight. Cornstarch clay is lighter weight, so it works better for "real" earrings and pins than salt dough or baker's clay. Form the clay into a flower, heart, or other design. Then glue a purchased earring or pin backing to the back of the dried, painted design.



Photo by Zengxiao Li on Unsplash

Refrigerator magnets

Glue a piece of magnetic tape to the back of a small, finished design or sculpture (in the picture there's a metal magnet attached, but it's a lot easier to buy magnetic tape and use that). A lot of businesses give out magnets with their contact information. If you have old ones around that you don't need, you can cut them and use pieces of the business card to glue onto the homemade refrigerator magnet.



Photo by Matt Haggerty on Unsplash

Coiled pots and trivets

Roll out a long "snake." Coil it into a round, flat whorl to use as a trivet for hot dishes. Or coil and then shape a snake upward to form a small pot. Use a little water to smooth the coiled pot. Multi-colored coils might make the project more interesting. (The picture illustrates a coil made with rope, not clay, but it does show what I mean by coiling a snake shape.)



Photo by Eric Deeran on Unsplash

Puppets

Form a puppet on a tongue depressor with cornstarch clay. (I couldn't find a picture of that kind of puppet, but this photo can give you the idea of attaching a puppet onto a stick.) Or make a jointed puppet with salt dough or baker's clay. Form a head and body in one piece. Then make two separate arms and legs. Poke holes in the tops of the arm and leg pieces and also at the shoulders and hips of the body piece. Poke one more long hole up into the middle of the body so you can balance the puppet on a long stick when it's done. After the puppet is cooked, tie the legs and arms onto the body with colorful yarn bows. Poke a long stick into the center body hole and see what your puppet can do.



Photo by pea on Unsplash

Sculptures

Experiment with different ideas. The puppet is one kind of sculpture idea. To make a car, mold the car body from baker's clay or salt dough. Thrust toothpick or matchstick axles at the front and back of the car body before baking, then bake the wheels separately and glue them onto the axles after cooking. Make a train the same way you make a car, with one addition. Pinch a section of clay or dough at the front and back of each train car, for a coupling. Poke a hole in the coupling and, after the train is baked and the wheels are attached, tie the cars together with yarn.

For more inspiration, google: "play clay ideas" or "clay craft ideas for kids"



Photo by Trust Tru Katsande Bah on Unsplash

Homemade Bubble Stuff

The way bubbles form and float is fascinating to babies. Toddlers love to chase the bubbles, and although preschoolers can usually learn to blow bubbles themselves, many of them still prefer chasing to blowing. Older children can learn to make specialty bubbles, like half bubbles or a bubble inside a bubble. And adults can have a great time doing whatever the kids are doing.

Bubble making can be a simple way to liven up a dull day for half an hour. Or it can be an elaborate party activity, requiring advance planning and special equipment. Parents can even use it to teach a little science.

The following bubble activities are some of those suggested in *Einstein's Science Parties: Easy Parties for Curious Kids*, by Shar Levine and Allison Grafton.

Bubble Solution: Gently mix together $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dish washing liquid (Joy or Dawn work well), 1 cup water, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup glycerin, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup corn syrup. This is enough for about three children.

You can buy glycerin at the drugstore. It's usually stored with hand creams and lotions. The corn syrup makes the bubbles tough for bubble stunts, like blowing a bubble inside a bubble. Be warned, though. This is sticky, messy stuff. Keep a damp wash rag and a bucket of water handy, and blow bubbles outside only. If you are planning simple bubble blowing activities and want a less messy product, you can leave out the corn syrup.



Photo by Dara Darcaj on Unsplash

Simple bubble activities

- Blow and chase bubbles
- Make creative bubble blowers: Recycle household materials into bubble blowing tools. Just about anything that has a hole through it will do. Dip the end of an empty toilet paper tube in bubble solution, and slowly blow. Try a piece of screen or a short section of garden hose. Funnels work, and so do straws. Pipe cleaners and wire coat hangers can be reshaped into bubble wands. Toddlers love to dip a fly swatter in bubble solution, swish it through the air, and make a stream of tiny, tiny bubbles. Use your imagination.
- Make weird bubbles. Pour a little bubble solution into a paper cup and blow into it with a straw to make bubble cascades and multi-bubbles. (Be sure that kids blow *into* the straw instead of sucking on it!)
- Blow up and tie a balloon and let children rub it on their hair to make static electricity. Then blow bubbles into the air and try to move the bubbles around by holding the charged balloon near them.



Photo by Antonio Sokic on Unsplash

Messy bubble activities

- Create handmade bubbles. Dip your hand into the bubble brew, make a fist, and open it slowly so that you form a circle with your thumb and index finger. Inside the circle there should be a film of bubble solution. Gently blow into the circle to make bubbles.
- Make bubble halves. Smear a thin layer of bubble solution on a table (use a plastic table or cover the table with a plastic tablecloth), dip a straw into the solution, and then start blowing gently just barely above the layer of solution on the table. When you get good at making bubble halves, try a little team work. Start a big bubble half, and then have one or two other people push a wet straw gently through the bubble half and blow slowly. See how big you can make the bubble.
- Try to make a bubble inside a bubble. Blow a big bubble half on the table, then wet the straw with more solution. Be sure some of the solution stays inside the straw. Gently poke the wet straw into the bubble half and blow, forming a second bubble inside the first one.

- Measure bubbles. Since a wet string will pass through a bubble, you can use string to measure the air bubbles and table bubbles that people blow. If you join two bubbles, you can measure the angle where they join with a wet protractor.



Photo by Ramin Karbassi on Unsplash

- Compete in a bubble contest. Give prizes for people who blow the biggest bubbles (measured with a string) or whose bubbles last the longest (timed with a stopwatch).
- Create a giant bubble-caterpillar. Line people up along a table smeared with bubble solution. Have them all blow half bubbles at once with straws and try to join their bubbles to make a long, giant bubble bug.
- Make bubble art. Kids enjoy drawing designs in the table when the bubble solution gets too filmy to use for blowing bubbles. An even messier, but more permanent, art project is making bubble prints. Starting with three bowls of bubble solution, stir 3 heaping tablespoons of powdered tempera paint into each bowl, making three different colors of bubble solution. With a straw, blow into the solution until a bubble forms while the child stands nearby with a piece of paper. Slip the paper under the bubble. When the bubble pops, the colored solution will fall onto the paper, making a nifty design. Experiment. Try adding a different color bubble to the print. Try using different colors of paper, too.
- To make a table-sized bubble, rub your hands in bubble solution and smear it on the table until it is thoroughly wet with solution. Stretch a film of bubble solution inside a circle that you make with your two hands by placing your index fingers and your thumbs together.

Keeping your hands close to the tabletop, begin gently blowing through the hand circle to make a bubble on the table. Gradually raise your hands higher as the bubble grows bigger. When your bubble is a giant, squeeze your hands shut to close it.

Science Experiments



Photo by Diane Helentjaris on Unsplash

Copper plating

You will need about 15 dirty pennies, a small bowl, lemon juice, salt, steel wool, soap and water.

Measure about 10 tablespoons of lemon juice into the bowl, drop in the pennies, and stir. Sprinkle in $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt. Then rub the nail with steel wool and wash it with soap and water. Drop it in with the pennies and leave everything in the bowl alone for at least 10 minutes. (Don't peek. Do another experiment to occupy your time.) When you come back to check, the pennies should be clean and the nail should be copper colored.

Why? Lemon juice is an acid. The acid takes off a layer of copper from the pennies, and then the copper reacts with the acid to coat the nail.



Photo by Dimitri Houtteman Tasker on Unsplash

Lemon-soda blast off

You'll need a bottle with a narrow neck, a tablespoon of lemon juice, a balloon and a tablespoon of baking soda. Put the baking soda into the balloon and pour the lemon juice into the bottle. (A narrow-necked funnel should help you with these tasks, if you have one. Use it for the baking soda first. Otherwise the lemon juice will make it wet and the dry baking soda might plug it up.) Then, being careful not to let any of the baking soda drop into the bottle, stretch the neck of the balloon over the lip of the bottle.

To blast off, lift up the end of the balloon so all the baking soda drops into the bottle. The balloon will inflate and fly off the bottle. (Baking soda and lemon juice form a gas – carbon dioxide – which fills the balloon and pushes it off the bottle.)



Photo by the Parent Powerline

Crystal garden science project

Children can grow a weird, crystallized salt garden that changes by the hour and is fascinating to watch. Arrange porous materials like bark, cork, pieces of sponge, tissue paper, and lava rock in a jumbled mass in a shallow glass pan or aluminum pie plate.

Then mix up and spoon this solution over the pieces of porous material:

4 tablespoons *non-iodized* salt

4 tablespoons liquid bluing (found with laundry products in the grocery store)

4 tablespoons water

1 tablespoon ammonia

Be sure the solution covers the bottom of the container, and drip one or two colors of food coloring over the garden. Then place the garden where you will not have to move it, and watch it turn into an eerie Martian landscape. It should grow for about four days, until the salt solution dries out.

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“One generation shall praise Your works to another and shall declare Your mighty acts.”



During the years when I was homeschooling our children, I wrote a weekly parenting column for the *El Paso Times* and the *Clinton Herald*. That was over 20 years ago. But since then, as I talk with my young mom and dad friends, grandparents, teachers and other people relating closely to kids, I find certain issues keep coming up again and again – issues that I once wrote about in a parenting column. So I’ve updated some of my earlier parenting columns to address those concerns and I am reprinting them under the **Parent Powerline** category in the www.beckypowers.com blog along with faith-based stories (in the **Story Powerline** category) that I’ve been sharing for several years with my older grandchildren, their friends, and my friends.

“Glorious Glop: Save money & delight your kids with homemade art supplies, untidy science experiments, and other messy fun activities” is free for those who subscribe to the www.beckypowers.com blog and request a copy.

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