



When the arts and creativity are part of family life as well as the classroom, everyone wins! Arts activities can deepen family bonds, provide lifelong memories, and enhance children's learning. Tips to spark your child's creativity and deepen their interest in the arts appear below. It's never too early...or too late to get started.

TIP 1 CREATE TIME AND SPACE FOR THE ARTS

Creating the time and space for your child to play music, dance, perform, paint, write a poem, or do other projects can help ignite their creative spark. Even if it's temporary, setting up a special spot for artistic activity is invaluable.



- ✓ Stock your child's creative space with musical instruments, markers, paper, costumes, or "found objects" that can be used in the art-making process.
- ✓ Make the space comfy and personal by decorating it with your child's art, framed photographs, or stuffed animals. Ensure the space is brightly lit.
- ✓ Create a supply basket or carrying case so your kids can keep supplies organized and easily move them from room to room or take them on a trip.
- ✓ Don't rush! Make sure your child has downtime free of organized activities where they can make art, experiment, or just let their minds wander.

- ✓ Ensure that your kids can enjoy a messy, trial-and-error process of creating without worrying about "getting it right." Nothing inhibits creativity like too many restrictions—or too many people looking over their shoulders.
- ✓ Whether your child is just starting dance, music, or drama classes or hopes to become a "world-class" performer, the development of good practice habits is an art in itself. Establish a regular schedule and place to practice. Consider age-appropriate ways to positively reinforce or encourage practice.
- ▶ **Don't forget to set aside ample time for cleanup...just like they do at school.**

TIP 2 CELEBRATE YOUR CHILD'S ARTWORK AND ARTISTIC PROCESS

The arts offer valuable opportunities for children, teens, and adults to express themselves and gain confidence in their abilities and ideas. They also provide great opportunities to share and reflect on what they know and think.

- ✓ Hang your child's artwork on a wall or refrigerator or create a "gallery space" and host a family exhibition. Make it a party!
- ✓ Talk to your kids about their artwork. Ask them questions about their dance, music, theater, and visual arts creations. Encourage them to talk about their artistic thinking and process.
- ✓ Try not to judge. Try saying, "Tell me about your sculpture" or "What was your inspiration for this song?" rather than "I love your painting," "What is that?" or "That doesn't really look like your sister."
- ▶ **Failing is an essential part of the creative process. Children who are pressured to be perfect will sometimes stop trying new things because they didn't do it perfectly the first time around.**

Remember, the process itself counts! Not every artistic product will be perfect or even "good." The process of creating the work—and the effort put into the process—is as valuable as the product.

TIP 3 TAKE FAMILY TRIPS TO MUSEUMS AND PERFORMANCES

Kids are never too young, or too old, to enjoy community events and cultural institutions, museums, theater, summer concerts, or childrens' film festivals. Just check first to make sure events are age-appropriate.

- ✓ Cultural institutions often offer low-cost or free family workshops or days to visit. Check out their websites or visit the site of your local arts council or department of cultural affairs for information on family events. Also, check with your child's school for free or discounted offers.
- ✓ Check for fun family arts activities around town in community and family newsletters, parent blogs, your local newspaper, or your town's website or Facebook page.
- ✓ Talk with your child about the experience before, during (when appropriate), and after. Share your thoughts, hear what they think, and be prepared to explore and learn in more depth after your visit.

TIP 4 NOTICE THE ARTS ALL AROUND...AND START A CONVERSATION

Be on the lookout for art in public spaces. Parks, building lobbies, and subway stations often have murals, sculptures, and other art that can inspire imagination, conversation, and creativity.

- ✓ Ask your child what they notice and encourage them to ask questions about the art around you. You don't need to have all the answers. Ask open-ended questions, such as, "What do you see in that work of art?" and follow up with "What makes you say that?"
- ✓ Share art, dance, and music from your culture, as well as other cultures, with your children. Use the arts to celebrate and teach them about holidays, history, and cultural beliefs and practices.
- ✓ Encourage your kids to take photos when you are walking around the city, make sketches of what they see, write a poem, or create a song or dance about their experiences.
- ✓ Look up! Local architecture can be a source of wonder and inspire a passion for history and design.
- ▶ **Be a role model. If you show an interest and appreciation for the arts and culture, your child is likely to make the arts a part of their lives, too.**

TIP 5 READ WITH YOUR CHILDREN

As is true for all subject areas, reading is key to increasing knowledge and understanding and to fostering curiosity and good work habits. This is particularly true for the arts.

- ✓ Read picture books with your young children. Ask them to identify colors, shapes, objects, and more. Sing along with storybook songs and bring characters in the books to life with your voice, facial expressions, etc.
- ✓ Read with and encourage independent reading in your older children. Your kids are never too old to be read to, and reading to them is a great way to cap off a bedtime routine. Have them read to you as well.
- ✓ Ensure your kids read a mix of fiction and nonfiction. There are great books about musicians and artists that can serve as an inspiration to kids and young adults. Ask your local librarian for suggestions.
- ▶ **Show your love of reading...by reading for yourself. Share stories with your children, fill your home with books, and make regular trips to the library.**

