

# Creative Ways to Encourage Outdoor Mark Making

Squirt shaving foam and spread across a smooth outdoor surface. Children can make marks in this with their fingers or paintbrushes. Provide shapes for them to draw around or letters, numbers and handwriting patterns for them to copy.

Provide chunky chalks for children to use.

Provide squeeze bottles (for example, washing up liquid bottles) for children to make marks with. Fill them with water and children can use them to squirt directly onto the ground, or fill with paint to make patterns on large pieces of paper.

Fill up a tray or large bucket with water and add mops, brooms, sponges and decorator's paintbrushes. Children will love dipping the equipment in the water and making marks all around the outdoor area.

Provide an outdoor mark making trolley as part of the outdoor continuous provision. An interesting alternative to this is to provide rucksacks or portable caddies filled with mark making resources that children can easily move around the outdoor area.

A large activity tray filled with wet mud for children to make marks in with their fingers, twigs and other natural materials. (Ensure that the soil used for the mud is not contaminated in any way, as you would for activities in a mud kitchen.)

Using chunky chalks, draw and write some patterns, letters and numbers around the outdoor area. Then provide children with paintbrushes and water to paint over the marks you have already made.

Provide clipboards and pens so that the children can write and draw as they move around the outdoor area.

Provide paint rollers, trays, window squeegees and cloths. Children will love cleaning the windows and develop their upper arm strength at the same time!

Use chalks to mark make on large stones or pebbles.

Large-scale sensory writing trays can be used to support all types of themes and topics:

- Salt and glitter to make a sparkly ice and snow themed tray. Add further interest by sticking laminated snowflake shapes to your mark makers.
- Green gloop (1 cup of water to 2 cups of cornflour) makes a great swampy sensory tray. Why not add some dinosaurs along with some twigs and leaves for the children to make marks with?
- Brown gloop (1 cup of water to 2 cups of cornflour) makes great mud for tractors and other vehicles to travel through, making marks and patterns with their wheels.

In winter, use snow as a canvas for mark making and creative activities:

- Put some watered-down paint or food colouring into a spray bottle and explore the different patterns and pictures that can be made in the snow. Investigate the different effects that can be achieved using the 'spray' and 'stream' settings.
- Use paint in pots with paintbrushes for children to paint pictures and designs in the snow.

Help the children to make their own natural mark makers for using in large activity trays full of dry sand or sawdust. Collect together some twigs of various sizes and with just a little help the children can then use elastic bands to attach materials such as leaves, fir tree leaves, grasses and seed heads to the twigs. If you have a hot glue gun you could use this to stick other objects (such as conkers, fir cones, conker shells, small pebbles and shells) to the twigs prior to the activity.

Blackboard paint is great for providing a variety of different outdoor mark making opportunities:

- Paint areas of fencing to provide large-scale mark making areas.
- For natural mark making resources, paint the flat surfaces of slices of wood cut from logs or large branches.
- Use large cable drums to make tables for outdoor mark making. Paint the surface with blackboard paint to provide the opportunity for mark making in all weathers.

Make some window paint and provide paintbrushes for children to paint designs on the outside of the windows.

Attach large pieces of paper to your fence using large bulldog clips and provide decorator's brushes and paint rollers of a variety of sizes for children to paint with.