

Making My Mark

At Starcatchers, we want to ensure that more babies and young children 0-5 can make their mark through art.

Through arts and creative experiences like music, storytelling, theatre, movement, mark-making, painting, drawing and craft, little ones are:

- Exploring
- Experimenting
- Concentrating and getting stuck in
- Persevering
- Making choices
- Expressing their feelings, thoughts and ideas.

They are learning that they have impact and can make a difference...
[Watch our film](#)

When a child creates something, whether this be a sound, a movement or a wonderful, colourful splodge on a page, they are learning that they have impact and can make a difference. They are learning that they have a voice.

Through arts and creative experiences, babies and young children are learning about their rights!

Children's rights

Children's rights are listed in the The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to make sure children are healthy, safe and have their views taken into consideration.

We want every child to be empowered so that they grow up knowing they have a voice in decisions that affect their own lives.

For our youngest children, a first step towards this is developing a sense of agency. Agency is feeling independent - like you're the one in the driving seat and able to make your own free choices.



How can arts and creative activities help babies and young children develop a sense of agency and learn about their rights?

Early communication:

Even the youngest babies make choices. Watch their facial expressions, gaze, movement and listen to the sounds they make in response to music, singing, storytelling or other arts experiences. Long before they know words, babies are communicating their preferences, thoughts, feelings and ideas.

By responding in a sensitive and positive way, babies learn that they are valued – that they have a voice.

Watch their facial expressions, gaze, movement... by responding in a sensitive and positive way, babies learn that they are valued – that they have a voice.

“...from an early age children are finding out about their rights, often through the way others treat them”

Dr. Rosemary Roberts, Pre-Birth to Three Guidance, Scottish Government

Free choices:

Adults make many decisions for babies and young children so it's crucial to find areas of their lives where they CAN make their own decisions and develop that all-important sense of agency in a safe, supported way.

Exploring arts experiences like music, theatre, storytelling, puppetry, mark-making, painting, drawing etc are all great vehicles for supporting babies and young children to begin to develop that all-important sense of agency and realise their rights! It gives them opportunities to:

- Explore the world around them independently in a safe, loving environment
- Experiment by trying new things
- Concentrate on something and get stuck in
- Persevere without fear of getting it wrong – they need a space free from stress with no pressure do things 'correctly'
- Make genuine, meaningful choices for themselves
- Express their thoughts, feelings and ideas, showing their individual personality
- Have fun and feel good about themselves
- Make a difference – even if this is just a colourful, splodge on a page, babies and young children will see the results of decisions they themselves have made.

Agency... feeling independent - like you're the one in the driving seat and able to make your own free choices.

What should these arts experiences be like?

- Lots of opportunities for exploring and playing
- Engaging and inspiring – babies and children WANT to take part
- A space free from stress – no pressure to do things ‘correctly’
- Without specific goals so that babies and young children are able to participate freely – no need to work towards a specific goal or product
- Time and space – to get stuck in, and to return to an experience another day
- Genuine, meaningful choices babies and young children can make themselves
- Babies and young children can see the results of the decisions they make.

What do we need adults to do?

- Understand how babies and young children can express their interests – through gaze, movement, facial expressions, noises and sounds
- Tune into those cues and respond to those interests
- Respect the choices children make (even if that means every painting ends up brown)
- Value the choices and self-expression of babies and young children
- Create environments where exploring is possible and encouraged (e.g. explore messy stuff where you don’t need to worry about the carpet)
- Be enthusiastic, have a go (everyone can sing, dance, draw etc – you don’t need to be Beyonce, just having a bash is more important)
- Play alongside children
- Introduce new ideas, textures, characters etc – you can and should bring your own ideas and creativity too!



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Watch our [short film](#)

Join us @StarcatchersUK on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram with #MakingMyMark.

We'll be sharing:

Everyday ideas for artistic and creative activities with babies and young children
Moments when babies and young children are exploring, experimenting, getting stuck in and expressing themselves. We'll do this through our performances, community projects and work with early years settings.

Contribute your own observations and ideas!

@StarcatchersUK

www.starcatchers.org.uk/makingmymark

