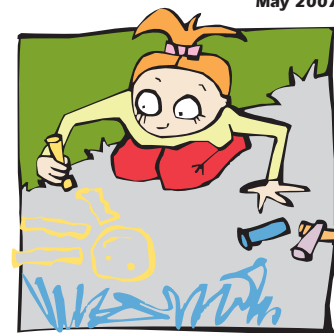




## Spark Creativity with Sidewalk Chalk



BY ROBIN DEROSA LUNDGREN |

### What to do

**N**ow that spring has sprung and your family is spending more time outside, it's time to break out the sidewalk chalk!

Kids of all ages love playing with sidewalk chalk, drawing pictures or playing classic games like hopscotch, tic-tac-toe and hangman. Best of all, sidewalk chalk provides a wonderful opportunity for creative play. Children can draw roads to ride their bikes on, complete with stop signs, traffic lights and crosswalks. Add a house and driveway, and kids can begin an outdoor game of "house."

Parents can assist children in this kind of creative play by encouraging them to draw and create games about things that interest them. If your child likes animals, suggest he draw a farm, creating sections or "pens" for different animals. As flowers start to bloom, encourage your child to craft her own flower garden right in the middle of your driveway. Kids will enjoy making up their own games or creating obstacle courses that they can hop, jump and run through as fast as they can. The possibilities are endless, limited only by imagination.

For a little extra fun, help your kids make homemade sidewalk chalk. This is a very messy activity – part of what makes it so much fun – so wear old clothes and work outside if you can!

### What you need

- Several sturdy disposable plastic containers, one for each color you would like to make
- disposable stirrer for mixing
- measuring cup
- measuring spoons
- 2 cups water per color
- 2 cups Plaster of Paris per color
- 2 tsp Tempera Paint (Wet or Dry)
- containers to mold chalk, such as paper cups, egg cartons, or toilet paper tubes reinforced with duct tape

(As you do this activity, please be aware that Plaster of Paris dries fairly rapidly. Be sure to have everything ready to go before starting the activity.)

1. Have your child measure 2 cups of Plaster of Paris and pour it into the disposable container.

2. Help your child measure 2 cups of water and add it to the bowl of Plaster of Paris.

3. Ask your child to mix the plaster and water together well, using the stirrer. The plaster should be stiff but creamy.

4. Instruct your child to choose the Tempera paint color they want to use. Have him add 2 Tablespoons of the paint to the plaster and water and mix well. Explain to your child that he should stir well for a solid color. To achieve a marbled look, tell your child to just stir the paint in slightly. If your child would like to make completely marbled chalk, have your child add two or more colors to different sides of the container and stir each side slightly.

5. Help your child pour her sidewalk chalk mixture into paper cups or egg cartons. Note: If you use toilet paper tubes, they need to be reinforced with duct tape and one end needs to be covered over with duct tape.

6. Assist your child in throwing out any leftover chalk mixture. **WARNING:** Do not rinse Plaster of Paris down the sink!

7. Let the sidewalk chalk dry completely, for about 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Plaster of Paris hardens in about half an hour, but won't be completely dry for about a day. However the chalk can be removed from the containers and used after about 30 minutes.

8. Have your child remove his chalk from the molds and start drawing!

### This Helps Develop....

**Cognitive skills** – the mental process of knowing by developing awareness, perception and reasoning.

When working on measuring the ingredients for the chalk recipe, children

engage cognitive skills. While using their homemade chalk to draw pictures, kids begin to notice part to whole relationships. For example, a truck can be made by connecting a rectangle, square and circles for the wheels.

**Fine motor skills** – the use of small muscle movements in the hands that occur in coordination with the eyes.

Children use these skills when pouring and stirring the mixture as well as removing it from the molds. Fine motor skills are further strengthened when holding the chalk with a proper grasp while drawing and writing.

**Gross motor skills** – the use of the large body muscles.

This area of development is targeted when children crawl, run, and jump while participating in games and imaginative play.

**Language** – the expressive ability to communicate ideas and needs, and the receptive ability to understand what is said or written.

During this activity, children follow written and verbal directions. Also, without even realizing it, kids naturally use descriptive vocabulary such as, "I am driving my blue car very fast on the green road."

**Social emotional development** – involves a child's feelings of self worth and confidence.

Playing with chalk is an activity which facilitates interactive play and turn taking skills. Best of all, the creation of homemade chalk is sure to instill a child's feeling of accomplishment and pride when sharing it with friends of all ages. ♦

*This monthly family activity series, "Hands-on-Kids!" is brought to you by a partnership between the Children's Museum of Northern Virginia (CMNOVA) and FAMILY Magazine. For more activities you can do with your children to spark their love of learning, visit the CMNOVA web site, [www.cmnova.org](http://www.cmnova.org). On their web site you will also find information about the Children's Museum of Northern Virginia and how you can become involved. CMNOVA is committed to building a place where our children can freely explore and develop a lifelong love of learning. Robin DeRosa Lundgren, a CMNOVA volunteer, is Vice President of Aquarian Entertainment and creator of the kids' cooking show "Culinary Kids".*