

Clay Color Mixing

From "Montessori-Based Activities for Persons with Dementia, Volume 1"
©2018 Cameron J. Camp III & Associates, LLC

Squeezing activities facilitate the ability to grasp objects and use tools, allowing participants to interact more effectively with the environment. Additionally, squeezing helps develop hand and finger muscle conditioning, range of motion, and fine motor skill development.

PURPOSE

- Exercise the muscle systems of the hand
- Develop hand-eye coordination
- Discuss primary and secondary colors



MATERIALS

- One tray
- One canister each of blue, yellow, and red modeling clay
- One "yellow + blue = green" template, with colored circles of each color above each word
The template prompts the participants to mix the modeling clay to create a new color. (The template may be modified to use any primary colors to create a secondary color.)

SETUP

1. Lay the open canisters of modeling clay on the tray. Have the participants open the canisters if they are able.
2. Place the template on the tray in front of the modeling clay.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Ask the participants to identify the colors on the template, starting with the two primary colors, and then the secondary color.
2. Explain, as the template demonstrates, that you are going to make the secondary color shown on the template by squeezing together and blending one ball of clay from each of the two primary colors.
3. Start by taking a small amount of clay from one of the containers and squeezing it in your fingers.
4. It might help if you already have shaped the clay into balls before starting this activity. The participants can model your taking a pinch of clay out of the canister and mashing it up. Use no more than marble sized amounts of clay. Large samples of modeling clay will take a long time to mix.

Attention: Explain to the participants that objects are not edible. Initially, keep objects out of hands' reach while the activity is presented to and observed by participants. Once they have seen how objects are to be handled, they are less likely to use objects inappropriately. However, always be on guard against persons placing things into their mouths.

5. Put your piece of clay on the appropriate color on the template.
6. Repeat the task for the second primary color.
7. Ask the participants to take a small amount of clay from the first (primary color) canister and place it on the matching color on the template.
8. Ask the participants to take an equal amount of the second primary color and place it on the matching color of the template.
9. Demonstrate mixing the two primary colors with our hands with your two pieces of clay.
10. Invite the participants to begin mixing their pieces of clay to create the secondary color.
11. Ask the participants to identify the new color once the clay is thoroughly mixed and the new color appears.
12. Ask the participants to place the new color of clay ball on the matching color on the template.
13. Read the template to the participants, completing the statement while pointing: "Yellow plus blue makes green."
14. Invite the participants to try another color combination.

EXTENSIONS

Introduce other primary/secondary color combinations with corresponding templates. For example, blue + red = purple.

HORIZONTAL PROGRAMMING

Use an eye dropper and water (treated with food coloring) of different primary colors to combine into secondary colors using similar templates and procedures.

VERTICAL PROGRAMMING

DOWNWARD EXTENSION

If the participants cannot mix colors due to motor problems, have them simply squeeze a single color of modeling clay. Squeezing practice and manipulation is the key. Alternatively, have them roll out the modeling clay into a string, if they can, to make shapes or letters out of the string. If they cannot hold clay, use the colored water materials described in Horizontal Programming. Let the participants point to or indicate what colors they want you to mix. Ask the participants what color they expect to make when the mixing is done, and then give the participants feedback about the accuracy of their guesses.

UPWARD EXTENSION

For a cognitive extension, once there has been sufficient practice with mixing the primary colors to make secondary colors, try a reverse operation. Use a card or other cue that signifies a secondary color, such as green, and have the participants select two different primary colors to mix in an attempt to produce the target secondary color.

For a motor extension, have participants knead bread dough of different colors together.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

P: The participants are unable to identify the colors.

S: Ask the participants to read the labels underneath the colors on the template.

P: The participants' hands become tired during the activity and they are unable to finish.

S: You can finish mixing the modeling clay for the participants but ask them to tell you when to stop. It would also be helpful to re-invite them to take over the color mixing after they have had a chance to rest.