

# LEARNING THROUGH PLAY – MUD AND FORTS

Letting things get a little messy will lead to hours and hours of learning and fun!

Mud is a perfect learning material because it can be found anywhere, and it is completely free. It is messy for sure, but with a little effort and some soap and water it can provide hours of learning. As an open-ended, creative material, mud stimulates artistic expression, imagination, expressive language and critical thinking.

## EASY MUD ACTIVITIES

- **Build a mud kitchen** using an old piece of furniture, pallet, tires or cardboard box or crate. Add some old pans, empty cans, containers, and spoons, and provide some water for endless fun.
- Painting with mud works well on all kinds of surfaces including paper, cardboard, or even on the ground.
- Mold mud into sculptures or make patterns in mud with a stick, leaves, pine cones and other natural materials.
- **Make mud faces** by putting wet mud on a tree trunk. Then, stick seeds, petals, leaves, little rocks, and sticks in the mud to create a face. When the mud dries, the faces will remain on the tree.
- Find an area where children can dig with shovels or sticks to create trenches and pathways. Give them buckets of water to make a muddy river, swamps and trenches.
- Stand in mud, with or without shoes and boots. A muddy puddle can provide hours of play.

### Play is Learning and Learning Matters!

Before you say “NO” to playing with mud, please remember it enables children to practice emergent science by exploring its properties, solving problems and investigating the living things found within it. Math skills are also developed through weighing, measuring, manipulating, and navigating.



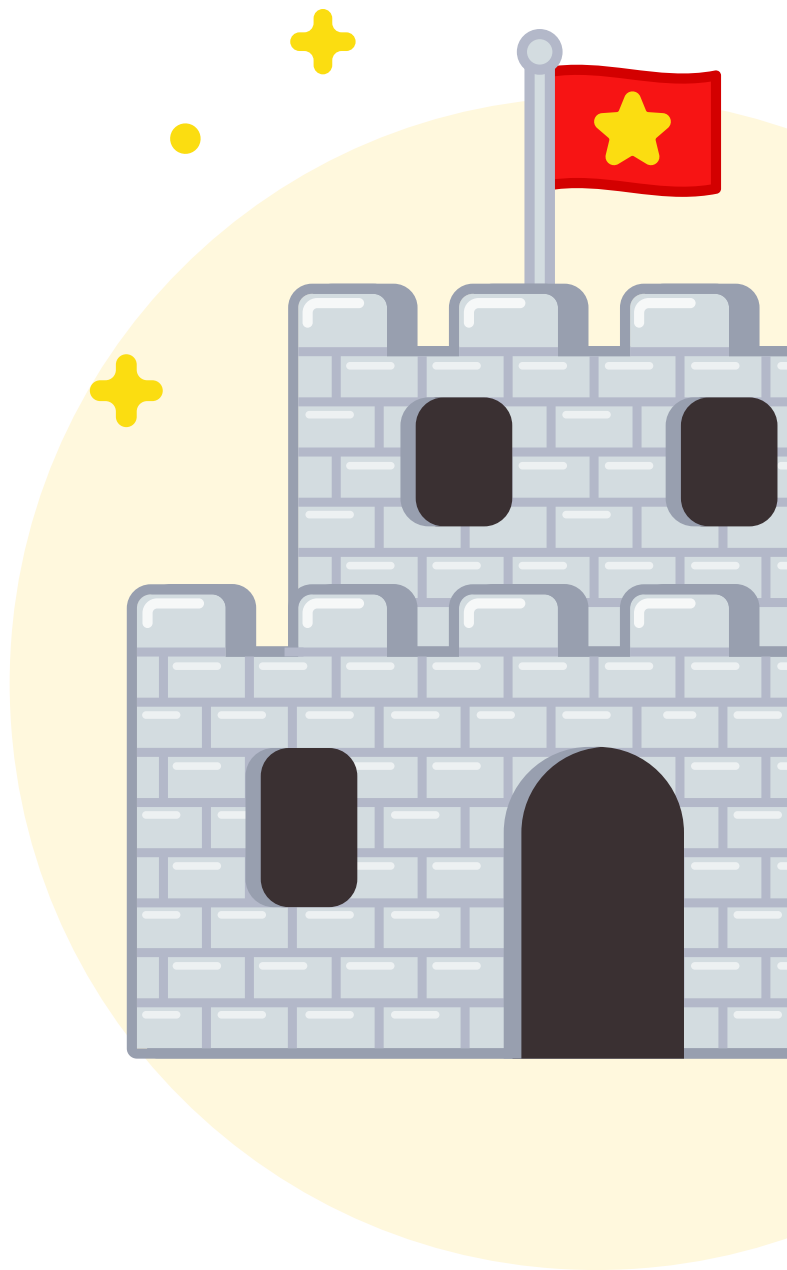
## BUILD A FORT INSIDE OR OUTSIDE

There are a lot of fort-building benefits including problem solving, independence, planning, and imagination. If your child is building a fort with a family member, they will most likely need to practice and develop cooperation and negotiation. There are physical benefits from the exercise that comes from moving around fort parts. But best of all, fort building is a great confidence builder and, once completed, a great place to learn, daydream and extend play for hours.

- Inside forts can be made with couch cushions and blankets or can be created by simply throwing a blanket or sheet over a table or two chairs to create a cozy place for reading, play, quiet time, and naps.
- Outside forts can be made with anything that sparks a child's imagination; from cardboard boxes and duct tape to cast-off construction materials. You may need clothespins, paper clips, heavy-duty office supply clips, twine, yarn or string, and an old sheet or blankets.

**“Creating secret forts, dens, hideouts, and playhouses isn't just any random kind of play. Children like to create places where they can hideaway and retreat into their own spaces”**

*Seven Principles for Children and Nature -  
David Sobel*



## REFERENCES

- McClary, Rachel (2016). [The dirt on mud play: Why it's great for your kid.](#)
- Sobel, David (2015). [Seven Principles for Children and Nature.](#)
- Spencer Scott, Paula (2017). [Meet the world's leading expert on why kids build forts. What he's learned is both fascinating and inspiring.](#)