

Five ways to make your child a creative genius

January 11 2017, by Elena Hoicka



Credit: Monstera Production from Pexels

Congratulations! Your child is already a creative genius by virtue of being human. Humans are far more creative than any other species. Sure, chimpanzees have come up with ideas like [termite fishing](#) (using a stick

to get tasty termites out of a hole), but most of us would contend that inventions such as space travel and the Large Hadron Collider are slightly more impressive.

Yet humans vary in creative ability – some of us are simply better at thinking outside the box than others. Children start to demonstrate their [creativity](#) from at least the age of one [by exploring objects](#). By two, they can [invent ways to use new tools](#) on their own and from around eight years [they can even invent their own tools](#).

Virtually all kids are creative, it's part of their nature. But is there a way to make them even more creative? Science suggests there is – here are five tips based on the latest [research](#).

1. Lead by example

Be creative when you're around your [child](#). A [recent study](#) from our lab found that highly creative parents have highly creative one-year-olds. Previous research has found that this relationship holds [even when kids reach adolescence](#). You may wonder if these relationships exist because of genetics – research has after all [linked specific genes to creativity](#). But twin studies have found that genetics accounts for [only a small proportion](#) of people's creativity. So it's much more likely that [children](#) learn to be creative from their parents.

Indeed, experimental studies have found that when children [watch someone else](#) be highly creative, they become more creative themselves. So if you want your child to be creative, it's a good idea to make the effort to be creative yourself.

How can you do this? A simple way is to come up with lots of different ways to use an object. For instance, when you're around your child, you could use a towel not just as a towel, but also as a cape, a blanket, a hat

and so much more.

2. Abracadabra!

Watch magical films with your child. One experiment found that if children watched a certain 15-minute video clip of Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, containing magical content, [they were more creative several days later](#). So break out the popcorn and butter beer, turn off the lights and enjoy! While the research hasn't been done yet, in theory this could apply to books as well.



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3. Keep dancing

Challenge your child to a dance-off. In a recent experiment, one group of children was taught dance routines to pop songs. Another group of children was instructed to improvise their dancing, by, for instance, thinking of all the different ways they could move their arms. Children who did the dance improvisation [came up with more original ideas](#) on unrelated creativity tests than children who learned dance routines. So put on your leg warmers and give Beyonce a run for her money!

4. Give freedom

Stop telling your kid what to do. Multiple studies have found that when parents have a high level of demands for their children – and at the same time fail to be responsive to their kids' own ideas – children [end up with lower levels of creativity](#). But, on the contrary, if parents are less demanding but more responsive to their kids, [children's creativity increases](#).

So perhaps rather than compulsively booking your child into every music and art class you can find in order to boost creativity, you could follow your child's lead and see where they take you.

5. Understand the touchscreen generation

Many parents are strict about limiting their children's access to TV and computers partly because they believe these devices limit their creativity. But research suggests this is not necessarily the case. Indeed, let your child play with apps that allow them to express themselves.

Researchers recently followed a small group of children in their homes and at school when using tablets. Using observational methods, they

found that apps which allow children to write, paint, collage, draw and make music [encouraged creativity](#) in children. This was not only the case when playing with the apps, but offline as well. So clear your schedule to help your child record their next top 40 hit, or sit to have your portrait done.

While a variety of research gives us clues about how to encourage creativity in children, there's still way more to learn. In particular, we know very little about how creativity emerges in children under four years. That's why we are running an online survey for parents of children from birth to 47 months to find out how creativity links to other factors like technology, social interactions and play.

So once you've finished your day of dancing, apps, films, and novel parenting techniques, we would love you to complete our 30-minute survey at babylovesscience.com, and then repeat it once more six months later. We will donate [£2 to UNICEF](#) for every parent who completes the survey twice!

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