

## Christmas Fun That Develops Handwriting Skills and No Pencil!

Handwriting skills don't start with pencil and paper they begin with earlier play opportunities. Using play-dough type modelling materials is great for developing hand and finger strength, bi-lateral coordination, sensory perception and for learning and perfecting different grips for using tools.



So why not make some great Christmas gifts and tree decorations with your child using salt dough, not only will they melt the hearts of those who receive them but you will be developing your child's fine motor skills (needed for good handwriting) while having fun, can't be bad!

### Salt Dough Recipe

A basic salt dough mix which I have used over the years and which has worked well at home and in school is:

1lb (500g) of plain flour (for more complex moulding projects use unbleached flour)

½ lb (250g) of cooking salt

2 tablespoons of oil

½ pint (300ml) of water

This recipe is great for making models or rolling out to use cookie cutters to form shapes. A tip I picked up for making holes to thread ribbon through is to use a strong plastic straw to cut out the hole as it will hold its shape better when baking.

### Baking the Dough

The dough is baked for a long time at a very low heat 100-120C or 200-250F or ¼ to ½ Gas. A rough guide to baking time is about 1 hour for ¼ in (6mm) thickness of dough. To prevent the dough from cracking as it cools you can turn off the oven and let them cool down there or wrap them in a towel and let them cool.

### Painting the Models



Once cool the salt dough models can be painted, I use ordinary poster paints as they come in bright colours and are safe for children to use. Once dry they can be varnished so that they last longer (this is an adult job).

Have Fun and Enjoy!

Photos from 'Easy To Make Dough Crafts' by Kristina Agate (1995)