



# INTRODUCTION TO THE CREATIVE MODELLING MODULE

The Creative Modelling module has sessions in both the  and the  levels.

## OVERVIEW

Creative Modelling develops creativity, and allows children to work together to realise different ideas. It is used to create artistic compositions by exploring materials, colours and textures, based on one of a number of recurring themes – woodland, orchard, meadow, town, street, decorative objects, animal forms and celebrations. Through Creative Modelling we are able to help children learn how to create representations of aspects of the real world. Each session involves the transformation of an original image based on one of these themes. The transformation might reflect a natural process (seasonal change), a natural form (completing the incomplete image of a plant or animal) or a human activity (making decorative or functional patterns, celebrating). As part of this process, we help them to develop mental models of, and emotional responses to, the realities that they learn to represent.

These sessions are built on the use of geometric shapes, cut out of felt, in a variety of sizes and colours. What is more, the felt feels nice to the touch. Placing the pieces on the felt background provides a soothing, tactile pleasure that encourages persistence and participation. What written notes and illustrations cannot convey is just how satisfying, straightforward and effective this medium is in allowing and supporting artistic expression.

## WHY THESE SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT

The materials developed for the module pare down the process of creating representational images to the most essential building blocks. Consequently, it is very easy for young children, and perhaps their less artistically inclined parents/teachers(!), to satisfy the desire to create credible representational images long before they have developed the fine motor control needed for the skilled manipulation of the tools of the artist's trade. With the most difficult technical elements of the task well supported, young children are able to concentrate on mastering those elements of the task that are within their grasp. These elements include such basics as identifying shapes and colours, using lines and dots, using all the space and grasping symmetry and patterns. Crucially, they also include developing a personal response to the subject of the composition. Through the activities, children learn to share ideas through talking. They learn to control their own behaviour and attention. They learn how to work together with the parent or another child, and enjoy the process of a shared creation.

## HOW THIS MODULE WORKS

Working with an adult, young children are enabled to create compositions across some of the most important genres of representational art, urban and rural landscapes, still life, representations of functional and decorative objects, and of animals.

The expected outcome of helping children to acquire sensory standards through these processes of identification, comparison and perceptive modelling is that children will both internalise the standards and be able to use the procedures to allow them to analyse objects in their heads. Early success boosts self-confidence and self-esteem, and this module promotes that through the ease with which they can make compositions. These new abilities, in turn, inspire the continuing interest and participation that will, in time, lead to independent mastery.



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The 'stickability' of the felt means that felt shapes placed on a felt background stay put when children work with the material at a table; they even resist falling off if you mount the felt background on a wall for display. Yet the pieces can be moved, arranged and rearranged freely, so it's easy to change your mind about what you have done – in this way the material itself supports reflection and improvement, and is therefore a fantastic way to allow children to freely express their artistic ideas.

## THE ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF THIS MODULE

Creative Modelling does more than just allow children to represent their environment and express a personal response to it. It also provides them with a chance to develop the social skills required for shared work, allows them to learn from each other and from the facilitator, and helps them to analyse and understand their environment, teaching a number of cognitive skills in the process. These include learning how to identify features of geometric shapes (colour and size), how to use the shapes symbolically as substitutes for real objects or parts of real objects in representational images and how to choose and organise substitutes to create representations (visual models) of ever more complex objects.

It also help children extend their knowledge and understanding of the world as they use talk, role play, song, dance and the creation of representations to explore the various themes that run throughout the module. Because the felt material is so easy to use, and because the tasks that the children are asked to complete are so finely graded and achievable, the module supports very young artists in creating work that would otherwise remain beyond their capabilities. Early success boosts self-confidence and self-esteem. These in turn inspire the continuing interest and participation that will, in time, lead to independent mastery.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

**The pack of pre-cut felt pieces** – the pack includes any felt pieces that you need in large quantities to be able to do the Creative Modelling sessions. Anything else that you need can be cut easily and quickly from the extra sheets we include.

**The extra sheets of coloured felt** – these extra sheets are also provided so your child can add their own touch, or so you can add your own ideas to personalise the activities. Some of the later sessions of the module will require further use of these extra sheets.

**Large rectangular sheets of felt** – these are to use as the background for each composition (to help suggest the theme of the session, e.g. blue for summer/early autumn, gold or yellow for late autumn, greys and cold blues for winter, black for night time). These felt sheets can be ironed with a cloth over them on a medium heat setting to remove any creases.

**Colours:** Sometimes the colours of the felt pieces that you receive may be different from what you see in the photos in each session, as the exact colours that we send you in your packs depends on the availability from our suppliers. However, the aims and outcomes of the sessions won't be affected at all.

**Preparation for the sessions** – you can prepare the backgrounds according to the teaching notes yourself, in advance, or do it together with your child. For at least the first few sessions, we recommend that you prepare them in advance and when your child gets used to the process, they can become more involved in the setting up of the background too. Once you get used to the module, you can choose to put more or less pieces on the background ready for the sessions, depending on how much 'support' you think your child needs with the creation process.



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## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

**A board to work on:** We suggest that you buy a pinboard/corkboard, to mount the felt backgrounds onto. These are inexpensive, and will give much greater pleasure from working on a portable, hard surface. It also provides a nice frame for their work. The large felt sheets for the backgrounds that you get in the pack measure 45cm x 70cm but you can easily cut them to fit the board that you buy. You will need a board that is 40–45cm by 55–70cm. You can usually push the background felt under the edge of the frame so that it stays in place without needing to be stuck down, so cut the felt slightly bigger than your board size to give a nice finish. Keep the felt backgrounds once you change them on the board, as you will need each background colour more than once during the course of the program.

**Storing the felt pieces:** We recommend that you buy a container with small compartments and a lid, for organising the felt pieces and making access and choices easy for your child.



**Photos:** Since you will be taking the felt pieces off each time you do a new session, and starting again on the same or a different background on your board, it would be a great idea to take photos of all of your child's finished compositions so that at the end they have a full collection of their work as an artist from this module. This can also help if your child feels upset about breaking up what they have created – you can always print some or all of the photos, or even make a photo book of their felt work.

**Display:** We recommend that you display your child's composition somewhere in your home until the next session and encourage your child to show and explain their artwork to others visiting your house.

**Giving feedback:** Use lots of specific praise about what your child has done well (placed the felt pieces carefully, spaced them out nicely, lined them up evenly, chosen good colours and so on) and help them to feel positive about their composition. Suggest that they should be very proud of themselves for the beautiful piece that they have created.

**Expressing themselves afterwards:** Ask your child to show the finished composition to another family member and help them explain, as an artist might, what they have done and why.



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**Shared work:** If you have 2 or 3 children doing the program, or siblings who want to join in, they should all work together on the felt compositions instead of giving each child their own board. We recommend that you treat the activity as a shared one; that way they will have plenty of opportunities to practise working together, collaborating over how to do it, listening to each other's ideas and contributing to different parts to produce a finished work of art together.

**Art appreciation:** Help your child to develop an awareness and appreciation of different types of art by visiting galleries, encouraging participation in artistic workshops and pointing out artistic works when you spot them in other places, for example in adverts, Chromecast rotating photos, museums, art in other people's houses and so on. Then when you do these Creative Modelling activities, you can make reference to other works that they have seen and make a point about your child being a 'real' artist, through their enjoyment of creating something so beautiful to look at.

**Your child's access to the felt:** In the first few sessions, you will probably want to put out only the felt pieces needed for that specific session, to make the process as simple and easy as possible. Later on, depending on your child, you could put out the tray of pre-cut pieces instead and let them choose according to the colours, shapes and sizes for each object in the composition.



## THE MAIN PROCESSES IN THIS MODULE

- ❖ Construct a detailed model of a scene or a still life (i.e. a physical representation that can be remembered, visualised and referred to as an aid in organising thought)
- ❖ Develop artistic symbolisation - learn to use colour, rhythm and symmetry to create expressive images that represent an aspect of the natural world or still life, and fill the available space
- ❖ Distinguish one shape or colour from another
- ❖ Recognise the common features of matching shapes (colour)
- ❖ Recognise shapes with different features (colour and size) by visually comparing shapes
- ❖ Categorise objects by identifying and naming common features or similarities, and classifying them as parts of a whole
- ❖ Substitute symbols for objects, in appropriate sizes and colours
- ❖ Complete images by recognising a feature as part of the whole
- ❖ Modify images by varying their features
- ❖ Express a personal response towards the subject/topic
- ❖ Develop an understanding of transformation - demonstrate relationships between opposites and sequences
- ❖ Develop artistic symbolisation - use colour and rhythm to create expressive images that represent an aspect of the natural world