

Craft School: Jasleen's Challenge

EYFS Specific CPD Making Tactile Spaces with Natalie Zervou



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Welcome

Welcome to Crafts Council Learning!

Crafts Council is the national charity for craft. We inspire making, empower learning and nurture craft businesses. We believe craft skills and knowledge enrich and uplift us as individuals, and, in so doing will change our world for the better.

We work to ensure craft is a key part of everyone's education and work closely with our network of schools, teachers and maker educators to secure the future of craft in the classroom.

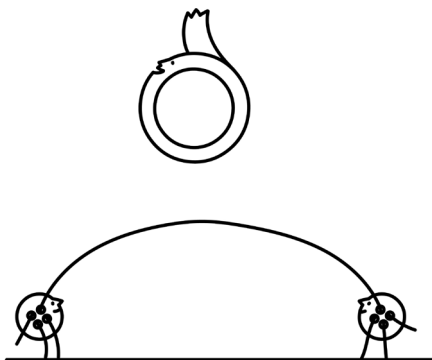
Our education work is underpinned by Make First, our craft education pedagogy.

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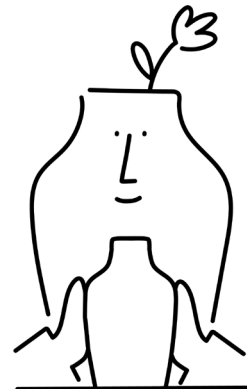
Make First

Make First is the Crafts Council's craft education pedagogy. We've examined our work with learners, teachers and maker educators to pinpoint what's special about craft learning and packed it all into the Make First approach. Make First is an open ended, non linear, playful way of teaching craft in the classroom.

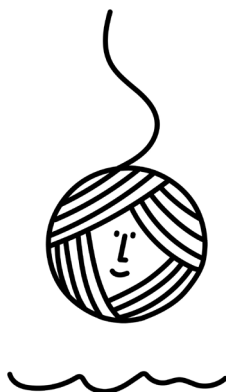
Make First makes use of open ended briefs, extended making time and learner led projects. By asking learners to start with materials and develop their ideas through making we encourage the development of creativity, problem solving and critical thinking. Below are key principles of Make First:



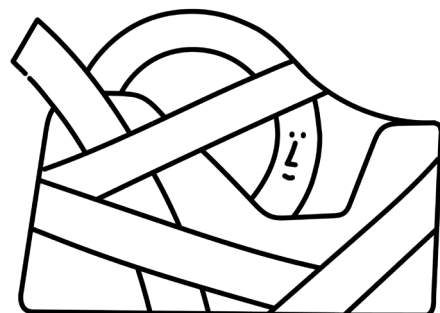
Make First is playful and open-ended; enjoy the making and don't focus on the final outcome.



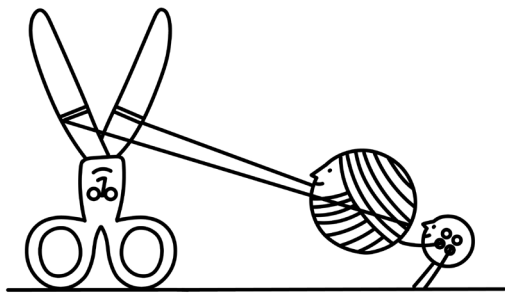
Explore your interests and develop your voice as a maker.



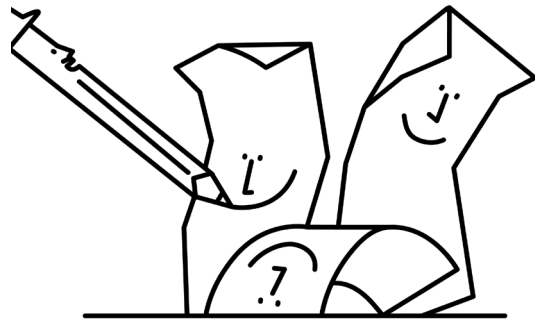
Dive straight into making!
Pick your materials and have a go.



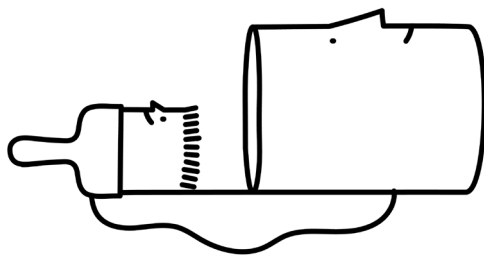
Start again, work on several things at once or repeat the same thing with different materials.



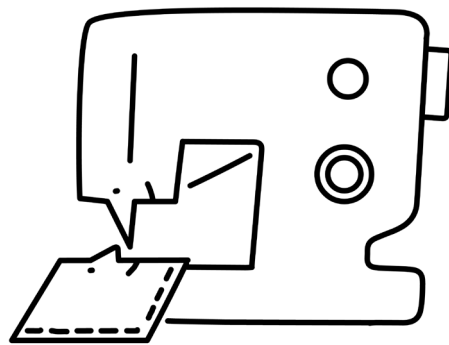
Experiment with materials to develop your ideas.



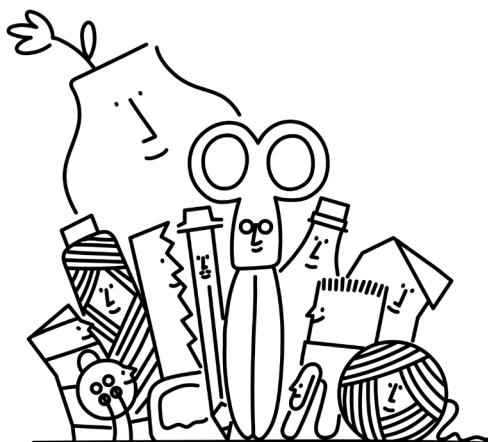
Make First is about the joyfulness and pleasure that comes from making.



Fail and try again to become a braver maker.



Build skills and knowledge from your interactions with materials and the physical world.

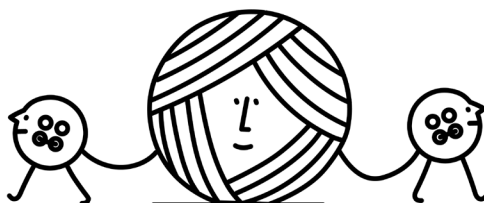


Learn together as a community.

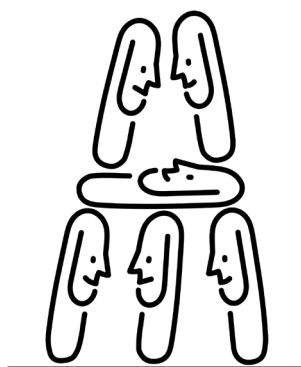
Make First can be flexibly applied to different learning outcomes, it's not a rigid framework and can be adapted to suit the needs of learners and learning outcomes.

Its foundation in exploration, creativity and collaboration allows for Make First to be used in a variety of different contexts and support cross curricular making aims.

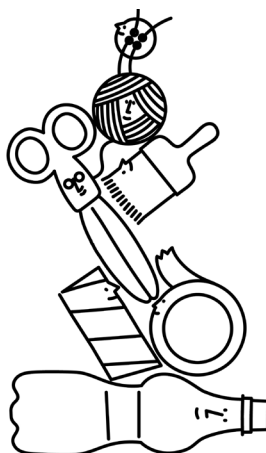
These is how Make First can look in your classrooms:



Make First is supported through a classroom environment that encourages collaboration and supports learners to make their own choices.



Make First can be scaffolded by discovery resources, challenges or technical drawings.



Make First can support a range of learning outcomes across the curriculum.

Maker Champion, Jasleen Kaur's *Tools for Living* series, in Crafts Council Handling Collection
Photo: Elijah Serumaga



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Craft School: Jasleen's Challenge

Craft School is the nationwide craft challenge, open to all learners from Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4 (ages 3-16). Each year, we invite learners to create their own 3D work in response to a creative brief.

Craft School also invests in teachers and educators. It offers a package of resources including practical CPD sessions and online teacher support sessions to help build their craft skills, confidence and networks.

This resource accompanies our CPD session held on 22nd October 2025. [You can find the recording here.](#)

For this year's Craft School challenge, Jasleen Kaur invites learners to use craft and making to explore the theme of **Community**.

Educators and learners will be working together to reflect on the communities they are part of, whether personal, local, global, or digital, and express their ideas through craft.

This is because we recognise that exploring identity, culture and the world around us is pivotal for young people. Craft provides a unique space for exploration, meaningful making and collaborative learning. Making together can help us imagine new possibilities, providing the perfect opportunity to think differently about what we see around us.

4

Making Tactile Spaces with Natalie Zervou

Natalie Zervou-Kerruish is an artist and researcher interested in the wordless language of play, sculpture and movement. All of these are fundamental in her on-going sculptural enquiry into the corporeal and connective qualities inherent in ready-to-hand materials.

Theatrical, tactile and playful, her work is conscious of the impact the human body has in relation to sculpture and space. Natalie uses accessible and non-precious materials to realise her ideas. These materials are often reused again and again and reimagined in new ways, like physical versions of a fragmented memory.

Some works involve the collaboration and connection with others, and during this process she is interested in the exchange, the transitional and all things partial.

Natalie has worked as an artist in a nursery school before engaging in further research. During her Masters where Natalie's focus was on how under-5s make meaning through sculpture. Since then Natalie has worked with early years children in various settings including museums, galleries, community groups and schools.

www.nataliezervou.co.uk

@startingwithart

Portrait of Natalie Zervou
Photo courtesy of the artist



4.2

Make-Along Activity

These activities are about transforming spaces for Early years children through tactile play and art making and accompanies the Make Along from our CPD session held on 22nd October 2025.

[Watch the session and make along with Natalie here.](#)

As an adult, it can feel overwhelming to think about transforming a whole environment for an Early Years session but there are small shifts that we can make that can challenge children to think creatively about the space they have entered through an experience. Turning tables upside down, hanging fabric from the ceiling, adding unconventional materials curated in a way that sparks curiosity are just a few ways this can happen.

It might help to imagine the room as your canvas, you are going to start the 'painting' and the children are going to help. It might end up as a performance art or it might end up finely tuned. It can pay to take risks, it's where the magic happens.

Things to think about:

Once you have set up the invitation/space, observe the children. See where their interests lie. Then you can add in other materials. We can make along beside them without interrupting their flow with our preconceived ideas.

What might an invitation to play look like with a contemporary art/craft context?

Do you have a favorite artist or crafts person? Use the materials and colours from that maker to add context and links. Be expressive, you are a collaborator.

Make sure the materials are accessible, well organised and appealing to allow children to make choices and transform their environments with you.

Two contrasting ideas:

“I am going to set up two environments.”

“I will play and see what happens.”

Working in EYFS, I’m sure you will be aware of schemas. I will think about these as I set up and if I know the children, their individual interests will be at the forefront of my mind.

1. Floor work

One idea we will be thinking about is clearing away furniture or moving it to the side of the room and using the space on the floor.

1. Get some malleable material such as plasticine, clay or playdoh and begin to make puddle shaped outlines on the floor.
2. Have bowls of sand with different sized spoons or any other ‘filling’ materials placed around the room.
3. Invite children to make more puddles/paths with the plasticine and fill in their outline with sand. You can also use appropriately sized pebbles, rice, out of date spices, sticks, tape, pom poms etc.
4. This activity will naturally move in different directions depending on the children’s individual interests.
5. Games can be invented during the process making the invitation more active; think stepping stones, walking on the lines etc.

This might get messy but use the tidying up as part of the activity/process. Children of this age love having jobs to do sweeping, collecting etc.



2. Tactile soft sculpture and the ceiling

Hanging soft sculpture will certainly be enveloping as we wrap the foam and soft fabric. This can be anything: old clothes, rags, wadding.

This invitation works well if the adults make a few and hang up around the space ready for when the children enter.

Children can first be invited to have a feel and play, lie underneath them and watch them sway. There are usually nooks, curtain rails etc. where string can stretch across a room.

1. Collect soft materials.
2. Demonstrate how to bundle and wrap. This might need team work.
3. Allow children to hang their soft sculpture themselves by pegging, tying or looping string.
4. Invent games, sway, catch the soft sculpture, turn the lights off, add torches and see the soft sculptures reflect around the room.



4.3

Where to get Materials

You will need:

Any malleable material such as plasticine, clay or playdoh

Sand

Rice

Loose parts to fill your puddles.

Soft materials such as wadding, fabric scraps, old clothes

Elastic bands

String

Torches

The world is full of materials and where possible, reuse and reinvent, get for free. Never walk past a skip without having a peek inside. Pipes, pieces of wood, all sorts can be treasured out from the skip, cleaned and reused.

Join a scrap store, it will be the best decision your setting will make. Here are some I frequent:

Children's SCRAP Project

137 Homerton High St, London E9 6AS

The Children's SCRAP Project collects, stores and distributes clean, safe industrial waste to schools, nurseries, colleges, special needs groups, churches, hospital wards, playgroups, community groups and charitable organisations involved in education.

www.childrensscrap.co.uk

Milton Keynes Play Association

2 Burners Ln, Kiln Farm, Milton Keynes MK11 3HB

A reuse charity dedicated to helping organisations divert reusable waste away from landfill and into the hands of children, young people and adults.

www.mkpa.co.uk/create/scrapstore





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London N1 9BY

www.craftscouncil.org.uk

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