



# Splatters

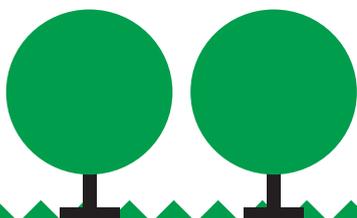
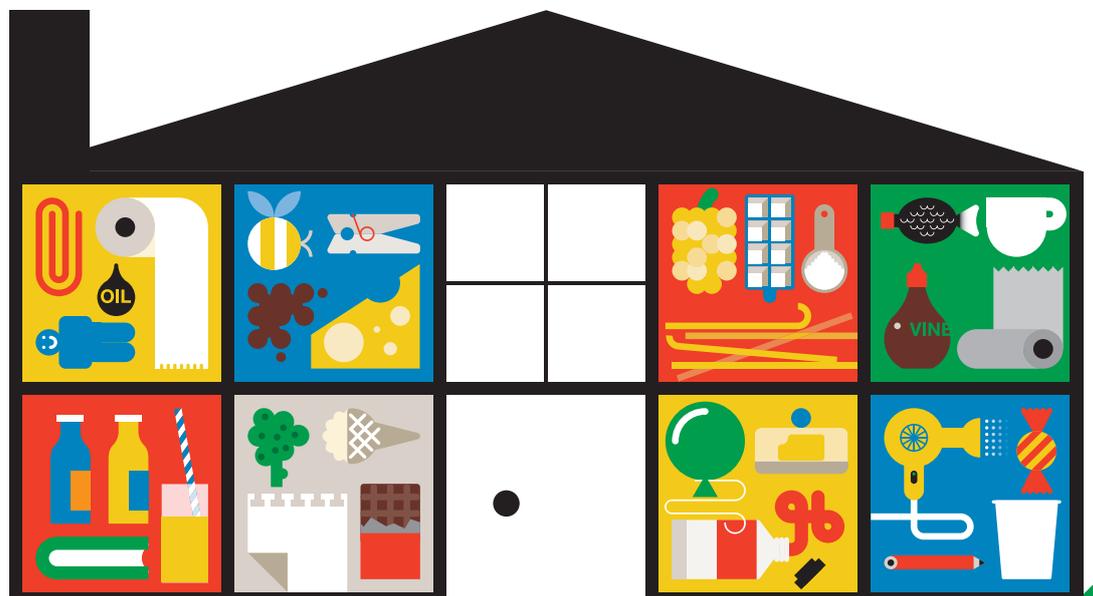


The activity

Make works of art.

ExpeRiment with hidden images in random patterns.

Learn that your brain tries to make sense of the world.





### What you'll need

- Paper
- Paints
- Black marker
- Newspaper

#### Special materials

Somewhere to lay out or hang your paintings to dry could be very useful.

### What to do

#### Being safe

*This is a nice and safe activity, though we recommend putting newspaper down, as painting always gets a bit messy.*

**Introduction:** With your child try spotting some shapes in the clouds. Point out to them that it's odd that you can see things, when really the clouds are just random shapes. Tell them you have a way to make your own random shapes that you can look for patterns and familiar shapes in.

**Activity:** Lay some newspaper down and have some plain paper and paints ready. Let your child splat paint onto roughly one half of the paper, at this point they can use as few or as many colours as they like. Try to encourage them not to add too much, as you will want this to dry. When they are happy, fold the paper in half and pat it down firmly to spread the paint around inside the folded paper.

Now open it up.

You should have a totally random shape. Ask your child if they can see anything in the shape, maybe an animal doing something. Help them along by showing them what you can see.

Suggest that you make some more, but try out a different selection of colours, maybe more or less. Take suggestions from your child about what you could do differently and test to see if you can still see things in the random blobs.

**Follow up:** When all your paintings are dry, look over them together. If you have a black marker pen you could outline what you can see.

Make a list of what you can see, are you seeing the same types of things?



---

**Questions to ask children**

**Before the activity:**

What things can you see in the clouds?

Do you see shapes or patterns anywhere else you wouldn't expect?

**During the activity:**

What can you see?

If your child sees any faces or people, ask what emotions those people are feeling.

**After the activity:**

What things did you see the most of?

Are there any connections with the types of things you were seeing?

---

**The science**

We are constantly looking to make sense out of what we can see, so random patterns often seem to form recognisable shapes. One part of the brain, the fusiform gyrus, appears particularly active when looking at familiar things, particularly faces.

Seeing familiar objects in random patterns is part of a phenomenon known as apophenia. This has been described as our need to make sense of randomness and find patterns and meanings where there aren't any. So a cloud that looks like a dog fits into our model of the world better than a shapeless mass of water vapour.

---

**Going further**

Spotting shapes in the clouds can be done anywhere (weather dependent) and it can be fun to remind your kids that the brain is trying to make sense out of the random shapes it sees in clouds.