

Preschool Arts and Crafts Ideas

Children just love to "create" and we must provide the materials and a little instruction on how to use them but, we have to learn to refrain from directing them on a project that will rob them of their creativity. Little preschoolers will become frustrated when presented with a craft that has to look a certain way. It is too difficult to make it like the original. Try to not choose projects that need "cutting", patterns, and paint within a framework at this age. Provide "materials" and let them freely explore what they can do with them and you will both be happier.

Working with Young Children in Arts & Crafts

Preschool children and very young children need materials and activities through which they can express their ideas and feelings which do not have a "predetermined" outcome. They need creative materials which by their nature, are non-restrictive. You need to emphasize process, not product. Children become creative not by what they "produce", but by what they attempt and explore. They will develop self-confidence and decision-making techniques when they are allowed to determine the outcome of their projects. Creative beginners need the freedom to explore without experiencing failure. A really good book to get for your daycare and centers is Jean Warren's book called 1'2'3 ART. There are day to day experiments to offer the children in their ART time. I will be posting some of them here for you.

WHY "OPEN ENDED" FOR CHILDREN?

Creating a work of art is one of the most enjoyable things a young child can do. Unlike activities such as puzzles or games, there is no "right" and "wrong" way to do an art activity. Each creation is unique and reflects the ideas and creativity of the person.

The purpose of true art activities is to help children experiment with different materials, be creative, and see and experience beauty. This is different from craft activities in which there is some specific product that the children are to make. Crafts, like puzzles and games, can often only be done one way. And there is a standard against which to compare the child's product. Although there is a place for craft activities with children, they should not be confused with art.

Because art activities are open-ended activities in which children cannot "fail," they can help children grow in self-esteem. They are also very good for preschool children who are not yet ready to make "real"-looking things. Preschool children are more concerned with the "process" of doing than with the "product" they create. They usually don't care if their people have green hair or even two heads! The ability to draw realistic objects and scenes often doesn't develop until the late preschooler early grade-school years. And even then,

this is not necessarily the goal of art. Many accomplished artists do not create recognizable scenes! Think of a picture that moved you because of the flow of its shapes or colors rather than what it portrayed.

Open-Ended Art Activities for Young Children

Cornstarch Paint

Materials: painting paper, cornstarch, water, liquid tempera, large brushes, paint cups

Add cold water to 3/4 cup cornstarch to make a smooth, thick paste. Stir in boiling water until mixture is a painting consistency. Thick and almost clear is the way it should look. Spoon the mixture in small cups that the children can hold in their hand if need be. Stir in 3 or 4 tsps. of liquid tempera into each cup.

Let the children brush this almost dripless paint on large sheets of painting paper to make designs and pictures.

You can also use this mixture for finger-painting. Store in refrigerator for later.

"FLOUR PAINT"

Materials: Flour, water, food coloring, construction paper, squeeze bottles.

Cut construction paper into shapes for the theme of the day or season. Fill squeeze bottles with runny mixture of flour and water and add a few drops of food coloring to each bottle.

Let your children squeeze the colored flour and water mixture onto the paper shapes to make interesting designs.

Variation:

Mix equal parts of salt and flour together before adding water to make runny mixture. Then let the children squeeze designs on styrofoam trays or sheets of cardboard.

Nine Easy Craft Recipes

Try these fun recipes to add variety to your Spring and Summer outside activities.

- 🌸 **Soapy Finger Paint** - Whip 1 cup soap flakes with 1/2 cup of water. Tint with food coloring or dry tempera. Paint on white shelf paper or waxed paper.
- 🌸 **Colorful Creative Salt** - Add 5-6 drops food coloring to 1/2 cup household salt. Stir well. Cook in microwave for 1-2 minutes or spread on waxed paper and let air dry. Store in an airtight container. Use as you would glitter.
- 🌸 **Homemade Paint** - Mix 1 teaspoon water and 1 teaspoon dish washing liquid with 1/2 teaspoon of food coloring to make vivid colored paint. Make sure your future Rembrandt wears an apron or play clothes to do this project.
- 🌸 **Homemade Finger Paint** - Mix 2 cups flour with 2 teaspoon salt. Add 2 1/2 cups cold water. Stir until smooth. Gradually add this mixture to 2 cups boiling water. Boil until smooth and thick. Add food coloring, then stir until smooth.
- 🌸 **Paint Roller** - Pry the top off a roll-on deodorant bottle. Fill it with tempera paint and snap the top back on the bottle. Now you have a giant paint pen.
- 🌸 **Disappearing Paint** - Mix 1/8 teaspoon Mrs. Stewart's Liquid Bluening with 2 cups water and let the kids paint the patio. It disappears!
- 🌸 **Play Dough** - Mix 2 cups flour, 1 cup salt, 4 teaspoons cream of tartar, 2 cups water, 2 tablespoons salad oil and food coloring. Stir ingredients together, then cook in a saucepan over medium heat until dough follows spoon and leaves the side of the pan. Cool and knead. Store in airtight container.
- 🌸 **Kool-Aid Play Dough** - Mix 1 cup sifted flour, 1/2 cup salt, 3 tablespoons oil and 1 small package of Kool-Aid or other unsweetened powdered drink. Add 1 cup boiling water. Stir the ingredients together, knead mixture until it forms a soft dough.



🌸 **Bubble Soap** - Mix 1 cup Joy dish washing liquid, 10 cups water and 1/4 cup glycerin (available at your drugstore, for longer lasting bubbles) Make bubble blowers from a straw, a kitchen funnel, or a thin wire shaped in creative forms.

Lets Be "CREATIVE"

If you want little artists to be inventive and creative, make sure that the activity that we give the children is going to produce that.

Art is not "crafts" To be a creative activity, the result must be open-ended. It has to lead you to expand..a play kind of thing.

You have to come up with a "creative" place in your home area that can allow the children to experiment freely without worry of a "mess". Creativity is messy and you have to buy into that as a value. The first place to start is to value creativity in your own life.

Art is more of an "attitude" than anything else. Seeing the beauty in nature, looking into the crystal on an icicle hanging from a branch. You can give a child the love for observing nature. This isn't science..it is art. Art is beyond cutting and pasting and drawing. It's an attitude that comes from what you feel and see around you.

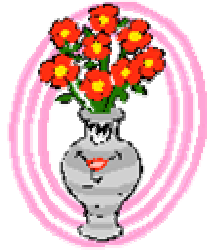
Some good books to read on the subject of open-ended art are:

- 🌸*Scribble Cookies, by Mary Ann Kohl
- 🌸*1*2*3 Art by Jean Warren
- 🌸*Art and Creative Development for Young Children, by Robert Schirrmacher



BASKETS:

I'm sure you all get involved in spring activities including egg hunts and Easter bunnies. Over the years, I have made several different types of baskets for the kids to take home with their eggs and goodies. Here is one that someone shared with me and I really like it.



You take two sheets of large construction paper and cut in circles the size of a large record or dinner plate. Take a paint brush and paint liquid starch generously on one of the circles. Take the other circle and place neatly on top of the starched circle. Then center the stuck-together circles over a mayonnaise jar with the lid on and pull down the sides and put a rubber band around the lid and the circles. Flair out the edges of the circles and leave them on the jars over night. They will look like lamp shades. After the night, take them off and turn them over. You will have a frilly-looking basket, and it is sturdy too. Then the children can decorate it. I usually use wadded up pieces of tissue paper that they dip in glue and stick to their baskets.

You can make the baskets two tone by using two colors of paper. I also used large drinking glasses for a mold and that worked okay.

The handle can be a long pipe cleaner.

COLORING RICE & PASTA TUBS

Does anyone add color to their rice or pasta tubs?

Here is a recipe for adding color. Works great!

- 🌸 One pint pasta or rice
- 🌸 Two teaspoons food coloring
- 🌸 Three teaspoons rubbing alcohol

Mix food coloring and rubbing alcohol together in a container. Add the pasta and cover with lid. Slowly shake the container, making sure you cover all the pasta with color. Spread the pasta on the cookie sheet in a single layer. Allow to dry for several hours.

BREAD DOUGH CREATIONS

You can make a white bread dough for clay for the kids, and actually they can make it themselves. It is a very simple little recipe. Just 1-2 slices of white bread, (crusts removed) and 1 tablespoon white glue.

Process:

Have your child rip one slice of bread into tiny pieces into a bowl. Add the white glue to the bread crumbs and mix with a fork until all the crumbs are moistened. Now, roll a bit of the mix between your fingers to check its consistency. The mix should be pliable and somewhat sticky. If it feels very wet or too gummy to roll into a ball, tear up and mix in a little more

bread.

Now your child can gather the dough into a ball, kneading it for a minute or two with his fingers or rolling it between his palms. Soon the dough will become elastic and satiny. As your child models the dough, it may begin to dry out. If it does, your child can dip his fingertips in water (have a small bowl at the work table) and knead the dough until it becomes more pliable. You can sculpt very small objects and it won't crack. You can make little items like earrings, buttons, beads or tiny figurines. It works great for taking impressions of shells or tiny objects which you can use to make a pendant for mom or for themselves. To add a hard, semi-gloss finish, your child can mix equal parts of water and white glue and brush on several coats. It air dries in 1 to 3 days. To save you have to refrigerate in plastic bags, sealed real well. It dries out quite quickly. But it is a recipe that most people have on hand. It's a good one to remember, and, in a pinch, you have some clay for the kids.

Gingerbread Ideas!!





"Scent-sational" Gingerbread Ornaments

Read aloud "The Gingerbread Man" or "The Cobweb Christmas" to get your youngsters in the mood for making these fragrant gingerbread-people ornaments. To make a batch of dough, mix 2 cups of flour, 1 cup of salt, 2 tablespoons of ground cinnamon, 1 tablespoon of ground cloves, and enough water to make a dough (about 1 cup). Roll out the dough and use people-shaped cookie cutters to cut out several cookie people ornaments. Use a straw to make a hole at the top of each cookie person for hanging. Allow the dough to dry thoroughly. If desired, small candies may be glued onto each cutout to complete the gingerbread-person effect and a ribbon may be inserted through the hole for hanging.



To make an imitation gingerbread boy, cut out two paper copies of a large gingerbread boy outline. Glue around the perimeter of one cutout, leaving the top of the head unglued. Then place the other cutout on the first, gluing them together. Use paint pens or markers to "frost" around the edges, neck, wrists, and ankles of the top cutout. Glue on two raisin eyes, a licorice mouth, a candy nose, and candy buttons. Allow the glue to dry thoroughly. In a Ziploc bag containing ginger, cinnamon, and nutmeg, shake a few cotton balls. Tap the cotton balls on the side of the bag to release the excess spices; then insert them one by one into the opening between the two paper layers. When this step is complete, glue the opening closed.



Deck your halls with boughs of holly and rows of felt gingerbread boys. To make a gingerbread boy, cut two identical tracings of a large gingerbread boy outline. Using craft glue, glue around the perimeter of one cutout, leaving the top of the head unglued. Then place the other cutout on the first, gluing them together. When the glue has thoroughly dried, stuff fiberfill into the opening. Then use craft glue to glue gold rickrack or other trim around each of the gingerbread boy's wrists and ankles. To his chest, glue a small red heart cutout, some felt holly leaves, and a small red bow. Glue on felt facial features or use fabric paints to add them. Glue a loop of ribbon to the back of the gingerbread boy's head for hanging. When these gingerbread projects

are thoroughly dry, thread them on a length of red ribbon, separated by felt heart-and-holly cutouts.

Jelly Scent Jars

1. 1-cup liquid potpourri
2. 2 packs Knox gelatin
3. Decorative jelly jar
4. lace fabric or doily
5. satin ribbon

Heat 1/2 cup potpourri in a medium saucepan. Stir in the Knox until it is dissolved. Remove from heat and stir in the potpourri. Fill the jar then refrigerate for about 2 hours. Remove from the refrigerator and let sit until it reaches room temperature. Decorate the jar with ribbons and attach a label.

MATERIALS:



- 🌸 Wrapping paper scraps
- 🌸 Drawings or magazine pictures
- 🌸 Brush to apply glue
- 🌸 Recipe for Sticker Glue
- 🌸
 - 🔴 8 T (120 ml) vinegar
 - 🔴 4 packets of unflavored gelatin
 - 🔴 1 T (15 ml) peppermint extract

In a small saucepan, bring vinegar to a boil. Add the unflavored gelatin, reduce to low heat and stir until gelatin is completely dissolved. Add peppermint extract and mix it well. Cool. Makes about 1/2 cup (125 ml).

PROCESS:

Brush glue on back of wrapping paper sheet or drawing. Use sparingly. Let dry. Paper may curl but will straighten when the sticker is applied.

If glue should harden while brushing on, place in a large pan of hot water and let glue soften. Save leftover glue in a tightly capped bottle. It will keep for several months.

To soften glue after storage, a warming tray dissolves the glue nicely. Warm about an hour before use.

Moisten the paper to activate glue and apply as stickers.



Flubber

Flubber is amazing stuff. Until the technology is such that you can click a button on the web and some real flubber oozes out a delivery port in your wall, you'll just have to make some to see what I mean. It may seem a little expensive, but if you keep your flubber in a tightly closed container when you are not using it, it will last for several weeks. Flubber is easy enough for children to make. Have white glue, hot water, food coloring, borax, and a large and a small bowl.

Large Bowl

1 Cup of white glue (One 8 oz. bottle is just right.)
3/4 Cup very warm water
1/2 tsp food coloring

Mix all thoroughly and set aside.

Small Bowl

5/6 Cup of very warm water
1 1/2 tsp. of borax

Dissolve the borax completely in the water.

Now, pour the contents of the small bowl slowly into the large bowl. Lift and turn the mixture until it starts to "flubberize". Let sit for about a minute. You can also add glitter to your flubber.

Paper Folding

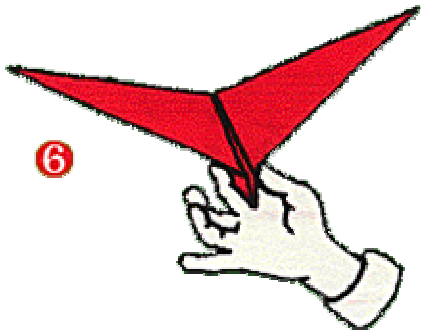
Activity: Paper Folding

Goal

The satisfaction of successfully following instructions and creating a beautiful object that is fun to play with. It is also a fine introduction to a pastime enjoyed by people all over the world: Origami, the art of paper folding.

Here's How

1. Make a square out of a sheet of paper (8 1/2 x 11). Each square of paper, cut or torn along the diagonal, should produce two triangles.
2. Bring "A" down to meet "B," and sharpen the crease with your thumbnail.
3. Along the crease, fold down a flap (approximately 3/4 inch).
4. Turn your paper over, flip that flap to the side now facing you, and sharpen the top crease of the flap on this side as well.
5. Hold up the paper, pinching the flap between the thumb and pointed finger of one hand while spreading the butterfly's "wings" with the other.
6. Finally, holding the paper in just one hand (pinching the flap from below), jerk your hand up and down and your butterfly will flutter by!



Additional Activity: Making Paste

Here's How

Place a half cup of flour and a large spoonful of salt into the bowl (the salt will keep the paste from getting moldy). Add one cup of warm water. To thicken the paste, add more flour. To thin it, add a bit of water. Once the paste is thick mold into animal figures.

