

Using the Icons

Each art activity has a list of icons that will help you select activities as well as make the activities more accessible and usable. Keep in mind that the icons are suggestions only, because no two children are ever alike. Use these icons as guides for selecting art activities, not as rules.

Adult Preparation/Planning



The *Adult Prep/Plan* icon indicates the degree of planning or preparation time you will need to collect materials, set up the art activity, and supervise it.

Icons shown indicate planning that is easy, slightly involved, or most involved. Note that the *Prepare* section of each art activity is for adults to do, and the *Process* section is for the child to do.

Activity Level: Quiet or Active



Some art activities (and some toddlers and twos!) are naturally calm and quiet, while others are more active and noisy. The *Activity Level* icon alerts you to art experiences that are one or the other, although of course,

individual children can change even a quiet activity to a noisy one in a matter of seconds!

First Art Cleanup



Toddlers and twos like to clean up often during art activities when their hands become covered in paint or get sticky. The *Soapy Sponge* icon indicates that you should provide either a bucket of soapy water with an old towel for independent hand washing or a fat, wet sponge for easy finger wiping.

Art Clothes



When toddlers and twos need to wear art clothes for messy projects, the *Art Clothes* icon appears. Children can wear a simple apron or smock or an old T-shirt over their clothes. Or, they can have an entire set of old play clothes to wear solely for art activities. Art clothes do not need to be washed very often, if at all. Simply let the art clothes dry and watch them develop a unique appearance!

Group



The *Group* icon appears when the activity works best with a group. Most activities lend themselves to both groups and individuals, so the icon appears only when a group is specifically recommended.

Outdoors



If an activity must be done outdoors, an *Outdoors* icon appears. Most activities can be enjoyed equally either indoors or out, so the icon is listed only when the activity *must* be done outdoors.

Caution



The *Caution* icon appears for activities using materials that may be sharp, hot, electrical, or include small objects. These activities require extra supervision and care. Safety should be a prime concern with children at all times. Never leave a toddler or two-year-old unattended. All activities require supervision of objects that children may put into their mouths, eyes, or ears.

Fun Stuff for Toddlers and Twos



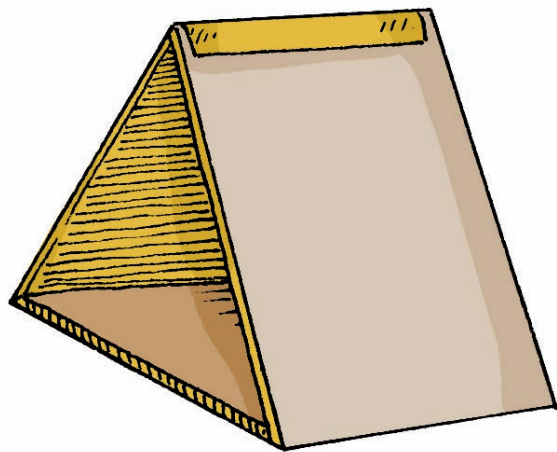
Making these art products with toddlers and twos will save money, provide opportunities to interact with the children, and produce useful art props, displays, and experiences. Activities include unusual art experiences (Color Bottle Blend), ways to display artwork (Art Baggie Book), and art props (Tabletop Drawing Easel). With a little time and effort, constructing these dollar-wise art props will give toddlers and twos the gift of creative discovery and exploration and that very special feeling of being cared for. Supplies are easy to find around the house or inexpensively purchased from grocery or hardware stores—and directions are a breeze.



Tabletop Drawing Easel



Make a simple cardboard easel. Keep fresh paper taped on the front and crayons or chalk attached securely to the easel with yarn so young artists can draw anytime.



Materials

sturdy cardboard box
handsaw or serrated knife to cut box
(adult only)
tape
crayons, markers, chalk
masking or packing tape
clips, such as large paper clips or
binder clips
paper

Prepare (Adult)

- **Cardboard Easel**—With a handsaw or serrated knife, cut off the top and bottom of a sturdy cardboard box (adult only). Cut off one side or more so the remaining piece can be folded into a three-dimensional triangle and taped closed. The easel will be sturdiest if the tube is made from a single piece of cardboard with each side the same size. Try to cut it taking advantage of the existing bends in the cardboard, which will make it stronger.
- **Easel Placement**—Place one side of the easel on a low table with the taped end pointing up so yarn or paper can be clipped easily at each side. Tape the bottom down so it won't slip.
- **Easel Paper Attachment**—If using one piece of paper at a time, tape it to the front of the easel. To attach several sheets at once, use sturdy clips or spring-closing

clothespins at the top or at the sides. Extra paper can be placed inside the easel for easy access.

Process (Child)

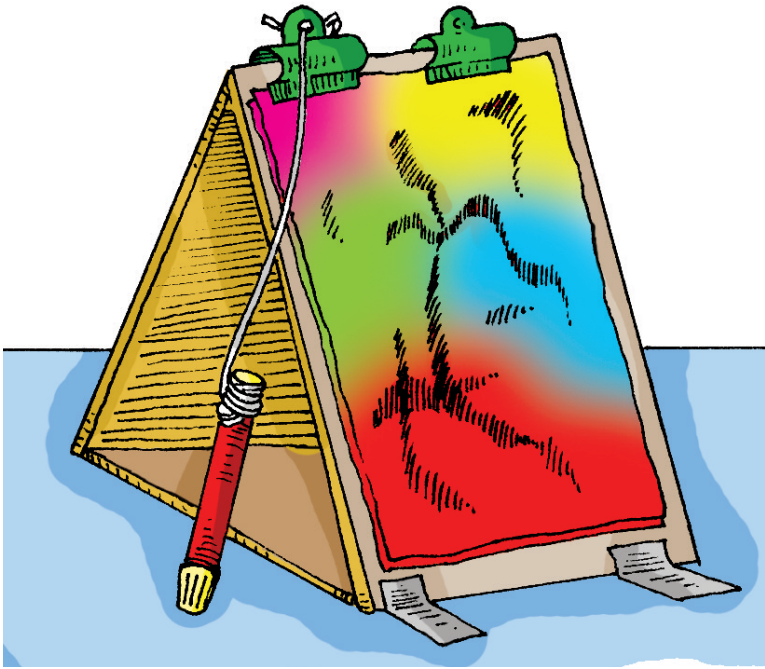
- Using a crayon, marker, or chalk, scribble and draw on the paper.
- When finished, remove the paper and slip in a new sheet (requires adult help).
- Make as many drawings as desired. To save paper, draw on both sides of the paper.

Tips

- Children draw on vertical surfaces with enthusiasm, which is why they often scribble on the wall at some point! Drawing in an upright position at this easel is natural for toddlers and twos and makes it easier for them to see their scribbles (and avoid walls).
- Tape the easel to the table. Place the easel away from walls and other furniture to prevent errant scribbles!

Variations

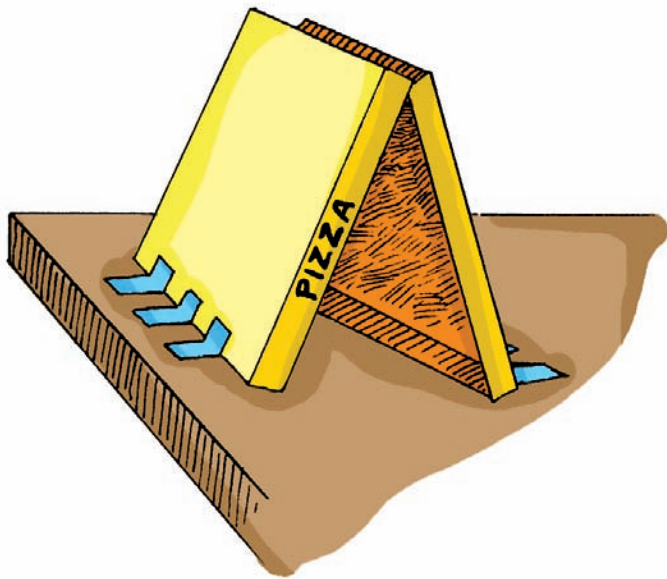
- Wall Easel: Tape a long piece of butcher paper to a wall. Tape crayons or markers to one end of a short piece of yarn, and tape the other end in the middle of the butcher paper. Make sure the yarn can't reach any exposed wall areas that shouldn't be scribbled on.
- Vary the easel placement so children can experience sitting or standing to work at the easel.
- Cut the top, bottom, and one narrow side off a cereal box. Children draw or print on the inside "gray" area of the box. It will stand on its own to display the art.



Pizza Box Paint Easel



Making a simple homemade easel—with no cutting required—begins with asking for a plain, unused, extra-large pizza box at a local restaurant.



Materials

extra-large pizza box
tape (masking or packing tape)
empty milk carton, quart size
sharp scissors (adult only)
plastic cups
marker
sand
newspaper
large white paper or newsprint
tempera paints, at least two colors
paintbrushes

Prepare (Adult)

- Make the Easel—Open the box, and tape the ends to a table so the box “hinge” is pointing up and the two sides become the slanted painting areas. If the table is small, center the box in the middle of the table so children can reach the easel from both sides. Tape the bottom edges of the box securely to the table (this requires quite a bit of tape). Children usually like to stand while they paint, so place the easel at a convenient height.
- Make the Two-Cup Paint Holder—Cut holes in a paper milk carton to fit plastic cups. Turn a plastic cup (big soda cups, promotional cups, any tall cups) upside down on the long side of the milk carton, and trace around the cup twice to make two side-by-side circles. Use sharp scissors to cut out the two circular shapes (adult only). Press the upright cups into the

holes. They should be tall enough that the lips of the cups stick out above the milk carton. To keep the carton from slipping, fill the carton halfway with sand and tape the end closed.

- Spread newspaper under the table and in front of the easel.
- Tape a large sheet of paper to the front (or front and back) of the pizza box easel.
- Fill each paint cup halfway with paint, and place the paint holder by the easel.
- Put a paintbrush in each cup (and expect that children will mix colors and brushes).

Process (Child)

- Dip a paintbrush in paint and brush on the paper taped to the easel.
- Continue painting, dipping paintbrushes in different colors and seeing how colors blend on the paper. Paint until satisfied.
- When ready, ask an adult to help remove the wet painting and take it to a drying area. Prepare new sheets of paper and make as many paintings as interest allows.



Carton half-filled with sand

Tips

- This easel is not as sturdy as the tabletop drawing easel but works fine because painting uses less pressure than drawing.
- Other containers that can hold multiple colors of paint are muffin tins, Styrofoam egg cartons, yogurt containers, or ice cube trays.
- The easel collapses for easy storing.

Variations

- Negative Space Painting: Cut a large circle or triangle out of one color paper and tape on top of another color of paper. Watch how the child chooses to paint inside, outside, or all over the shape.
- Save children's artwork by rolling and inserting into paper towel or wrapping paper tubes.
- Vary the size, color, and shape of paper choices.

Child-Friendly Marker Holder



Construct a marker holder that is child friendly for independent use. Marker caps are secured in a plaster base. The holder encourages children to put markers away while indulging their love of sticking things in holes.



Materials

old mixing spoon or paint stick
plaster of Paris
measuring cup
water
old bucket or bowl
old metal baking pan
package of washable markers

Prepare and Process

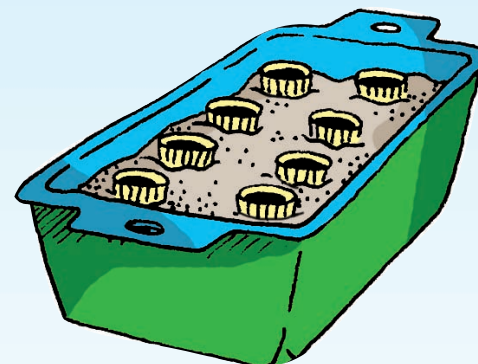
- With child's help, use an old mixing spoon or paint stick to mix about 3–5 cups (1 liter–1 ¼ liters) plaster of Paris with water in an old bucket or bowl until it has the consistency of thick cream. Spread the mixture in the bottom of the old metal baking pan about 2" (5 cm) deep. The pan is a permanent part of the base.

Important: Do not pour excess plaster of Paris down the drain, as it will cause a severe clog. When dry, discard in trash or crumble in garden.

- Push the marker caps halfway into the wet plaster in a neat arrangement, with the open ends pointing upward.
- When the plaster dries (and it dries fairly fast), the caps will be permanently stuck in the plaster.
- Replace markers in their caps, with their ends sticking up like birthday candles.
- Children use markers as needed and return them when finished, sometimes matching the cap color to the marker color and sometimes mixing colors.

Tips

- Water-soluble “washable” markers with wide tips work best for children. While marks made with washable markers usually come off clothes in the laundry, “washable” markers still may stain fabric, especially whites. Wearing old clothes for art activities eliminates this concern.
- Children love to draw with markers on their hands, faces, and bodies. Though the marks are hard to wash off, they will fade away in a day or so with regular washing.
- Toddlers and twos like to stick the tips of markers in their mouths and suck on them like a bottle, so keep an eye on young children to avoid colored lips and teeth.
- Only markers that say *nontoxic* should be used. Most markers that say *permanent* are toxic.



Push marker caps halfway in before plaster sets.

Mini-Marker Board



Make a homemade mini-version of a dry-erase board for drawing experiences. This portable board is especially convenient for entertaining toddlers and twos while traveling, during restaurant waits, and during visits to the doctor's office!



Materials

white dry-erase material (available at lumber or hardware stores)
wide duct tape
washable markers
old sock

Prepare and Process

- Purchase white dry-erase board material (sometimes called *shower board*) at your local lumber or hardware store. This material usually comes in large sheets, but most stores will cut it into whatever smaller sizes you prefer. Squares 2' or 60 cm are about right.
- Before using, cover the rough edges with wide duct tape.
- Children draw on it with washable markers, and erase marks with an old sock.
- Children also like spraying the board with water and wiping it clean with a soft diaper, old towel, or old sock pulled over one hand.
- **Note:** Dry-erase board is versatile: Use it on paint easels; make it into a child's tabletop; or attach it to the wall with screws.



Mini-Chalkboard



Make a homemade mini-chalkboard for quick draw-and-erase experiences. An old sock on one hand makes a great eraser!



Materials

chalkboard spray paint (adult only)
cardboard or other stiff material
heavy-duty scissors or saw (adult only)
chalk
old sock

Prepare and Process

- Purchase chalkboard spray paint or brush-on paint at a local lumber or hardware store.
- Chalkboard paint can be used on many different surfaces from cardboard to wood. Cut heavy cardboard or a sheet of smooth-sided masonite into a board about 1½' x 2' [45 cm x 60 cm] or any size preferred.
- Brush or spray on the first coat (adult only), and then dry. Repeat painting and drying for about three coats for best results.
- Before using, season the chalkboard by first completely covering the entire board with chalk, then erasing it. Now the board is ready for children to use with standard chalk and an old sock for an eraser.

Note: Children also think it is fun to paint with water on the chalkboard. Or, keep the sock and chalk in a school-type zippered pencil pouch attached to the board.

Variations

- Adhesive plastic (contact paper) also comes in a chalkboard surface and can be used to cover cardboard boxes, sheets of

wood, or other surfaces. Cover an entire table or wall!

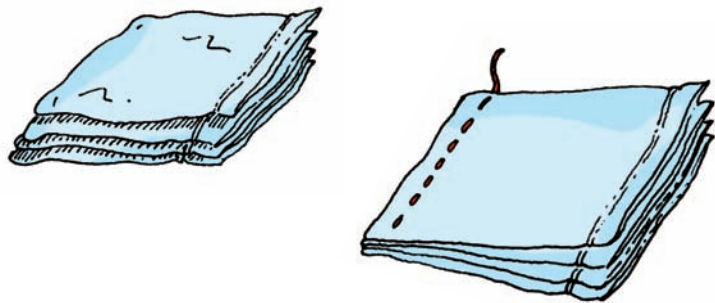
- Be fancy and make cardboard chalkboards in any shape you can imagine, from apples to alligators. For longer-lasting construction, back the board with poster board for extra strength, and edge with colorful, wide, cloth tape.



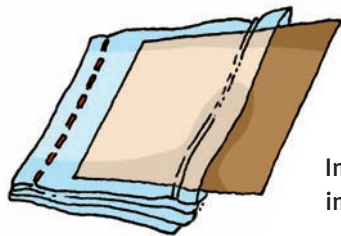
Art Baggie Book



Make a sturdy book for saving children's artwork, and for toddlers and twos to enjoy looking at time after time. Art can be replaced with new choices at any time because the book is made from heavy zipper-closure freezer bags.



Stitch this edge together.



Insert a square of manila folder into each "page" for sturdiness.

Materials

zipper-closure freezer bags (large, heavy, variety)
needle and thread (adult only)
manila file folders
scissors
photo
artwork cut to size of bag

Prepare and Process

- Stack freezer bags together, lining up the zipper-closure sides together. Use at least four bags.
- To bind bags together with needle and thread, slipstitch the stack of bags on the folded side with the zipper sides at the outside edge. (See illustrations.) Or, sew together on a sewing machine on a long or basting stitch.
- Cut manila file folders to fit the bags. Slide one into each bag to make it stiff and provide a background within the bag.
- The first bag can be the cover. A photo or handprint in the first baggie might make a nice cover. Write a choice of titles such as *My Art* or *Art by Tonia*.
- Cut artwork to fit the size of the bag (with child's permission). Slide artwork in the front and back of each bag, and close the bag. Even messy artwork with glitter is fine because loose pieces stay in the pouch.
- Turn the pages and look at the artwork together.

- At any time, replace the artwork with new selections. As children grow, add stories or dictations.

Variations

- Punch holes in bags and connect with notebook rings or shower-curtain rings for a baggie book that flips. Great for display.
- Sew multiple freezer bags into a "quilt" or wall hanging to display numerous, ever-changing artworks.

Famous Frames



Recycle old wooden picture frames to show off children's artwork in an impressive grown-up way. Garage sales and thrift stores are great dollar-wise sources for frames.



Materials

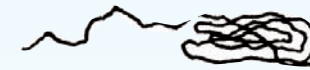
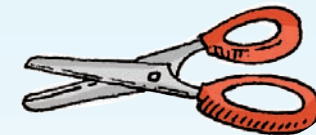
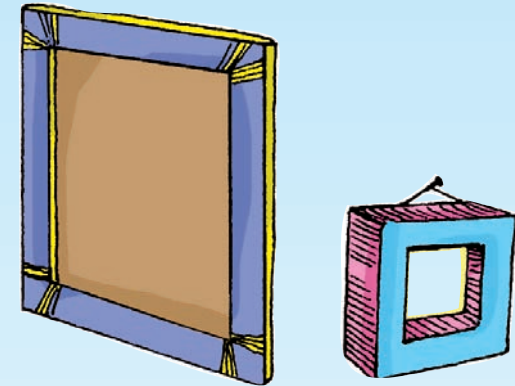
old wooden frames, all sizes
cleaning supplies and rags
wire or hanging device
paper for backing
scissors
children's artwork
tape

Prepare and Process

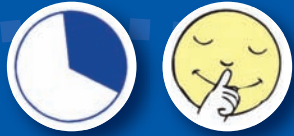
- Remove any artwork or photograph from the old frame, and clean the frame with rags and cleaning supplies of choice.
- Add a wire or other hanging device to the back if none exists.
- Cut a sheet of paper or cardboard to fit the back of the frame.
- Tape the child's artwork to the center of the backing sheet.
- Turn the frame over. Tape the backing sheet in place.
- Hang the frame with the child's artwork on display. Change the artwork at any time or leave all year long.
- Make many frames for children's art displays. Decorate an entire wall!

Variations

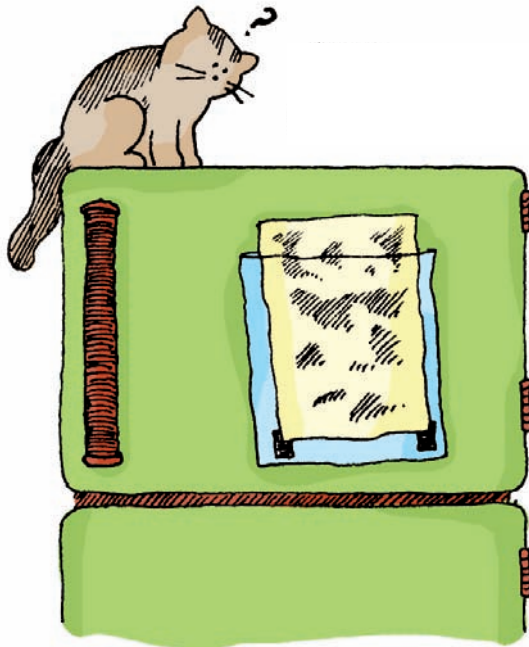
- Permanently frame a child's artwork behind glass—complete with a framing mat board—to enjoy always. Framed artwork is destined to become a family heirloom.
- Start a framed photo display that changes regularly.



Fridge Frame



Display children's works of art inside plastic sheet protectors. Attach to the fridge with magnetic strips. Change artwork on display by slipping it in and out of the clear pocket for all to enjoy.



Materials

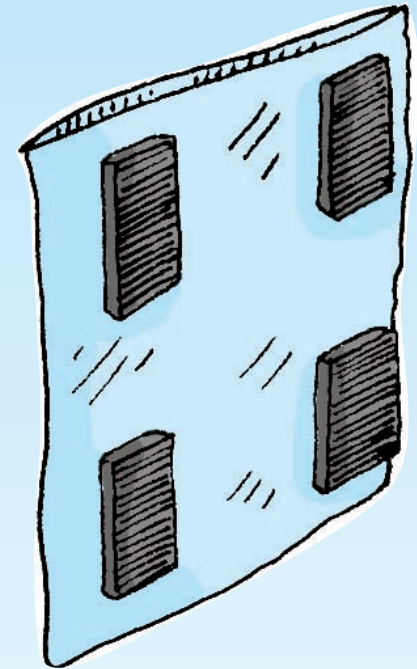
magnetic strips or sheets with peel-off backing
(hobby or discount store)
clear plastic sheet protector (office supply
or discount store)
scissors
refrigerator door
children's artwork

Prepare and Process

- Stick four squares of thin magnetic strips on the back corners of a sheet protector. The magnetic material comes with a peel-off backing and can be cut to any size.
- Press the sheet protector to the fridge, file cabinet, or any metal surface. It should hold firm.
- Slide an artwork into the sheet protector to view.
- Change artwork at any time.

Variations

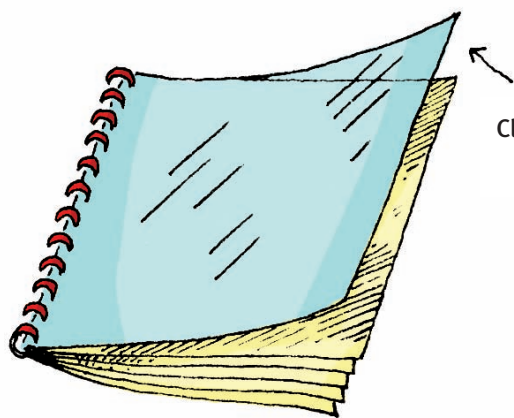
- Cover the fridge with many display sheets.
- Create artwork on paper that fits inside a clear plastic CD case, which will be a natural display box when the art is slipped inside.



Keepsake Art Book



Collect art and photos all year long, and assemble the art book all at once. Though this book takes preparation and work, it is well worth the effort to produce a wonderful, lasting keepsake gift for the child to carry into adulthood.



Clear plastic sheet on very top.

Materials

child's artwork
photos
collection bag
copy store/binding service
scissors
paper clips
rubber cement (adult only)

Prepare and Process

- Collect artwork and photos throughout the year. Store them in a heavy-duty fabric sack hanging in a closet, or put them in file folders in a cardboard box.
- Visit a copy store and have them bind two pieces of matte board for the front and back, one clear plastic sheet for the very top to protect the cover, and fill with different colors of heavier cardstock paper inside. Bind with a plastic spiral or comb binding on the short side, creating a book that opens the same as the book in the illustration.
- With children's permission and help, cut up old artwork and photos, and arrange with paper clips on pages until the children are satisfied. The arrangement may be chronological or theme oriented. For example, categories might be photos of the child, favorite play places, friends, field trips, and toys.
- With rubber cement (adult only), stick the

artwork and photos on the pages. Leave some blank pages at the end, if you like, for last-minute additions.

- Decorate the cover page with a piece of artwork or the child's handprint. Label with the year the art book was compiled.
- Read and enjoy often. Each child will treasure this book over the years and into adulthood.

Variations

- A copy store can add pages that have pouches.
- Add peekaboo windows on some pages.
- Encourage children to help choose artwork, photos, colors of paper, or involve them in any other way that is fun, meaningful, or helpful.

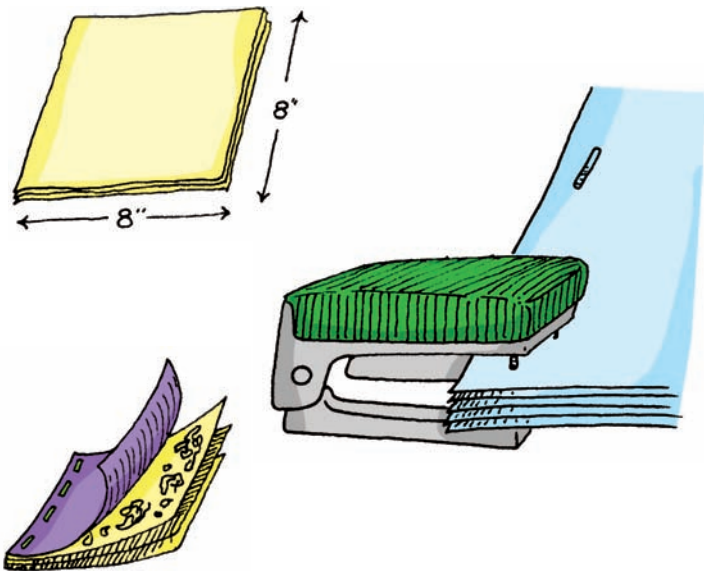


Arrange art with paper clips until sure about placement.

Scribble Book



What toddler or two-year-old hasn't tried scribbling in one of his bedtime storybooks? Satisfy this elemental desire by making a simple book for scribbling, with each page a different kind of paper that will stimulate the imagination.



Materials

choices of collected paper (see list)
scissors
stapler
markers, crayons

Paper Suggestions

brown grocery sack
brown or white lunch bag
butcher paper
colored, crinkly Mylar paper
contact paper (with protective backing)
craft tissue paper
newspaper
old posters
parchment
piece of fabric
piece of muslin
plastic grocery bag
plastic wrap/cellophane, clear or colored
wallpaper
wax paper
wrapping paper
wrapping tissue

Prepare (Adult)

- Pre-assemble the book—Cut all the papers into squares, about 8" x 8" (25 cm x 25 cm).
- Stack the papers and staple them together along one side to make a book. If a paper has different textures on each side, such as wallpaper, put two sheets in the book, each with a different side facing upward.

- Make a front and back cover with matching blank papers, if desired. Ask the child what to write on the cover—perhaps the child's name or a special title.

Process (Child)

- Explore the different types of papers in the book by feel, smell, sound, and sight. Some children will employ the sense of taste as well!
- With markers and crayons, scribble and draw on each page.
Note: Children will discover how different papers react to different drawing tools.

Tips

- Children like to feel the differences in the papers and see how markers and crayons react on different textures and surfaces of paper.
- Children enjoy carrying a scribble book around when it is filled with sturdy, noisy, crinkly papers like Mylar.
- Make tiny books and large books, round, rectangular, or triangular books that inspire children to draw in unique ways.

Buckets of Bubbles



Toddlers and twos dip their hands into buckets of colored soap and water and feel the tiny bubbles tickle! This is both a fantastic sensory experience and an excellent hand-washing experience following messy art projects.



Materials

- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) dishwashing liquid soap
- large bucket or dishpan
- water (warm is nice!)
- 2 old towels
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) food coloring
- sponges
- scissors (adult only)

Prepare (Adult)

- Pour dishwashing soap into the bottom of the bucket.
- Fill the bucket halfway with water from the sink or hose. Spray the water directly into the bucket to create the most bubbles (while making wonderful sounds at the same time). Hold a thumb over the end of the hose to increase pressure and make a stronger spray for the best bubbles of all.
- Spread an old towel on the floor, and place the bucket on top. To prevent any slipping, the towel should be large enough for a child to stand on if some water splashes out.
- Drop dots of one color of food coloring on top of the bubbles with children's help.
- Cut new kitchen sponges in half (adult only).

Process (Child)

- Mix and swirl the color into the bubbles with bare hands.

- Add more drops of food coloring in a new color so children can see how the bubbles change.
- Use the sponges to soak and squeeze out the colored water.
- Put another color directly on the sponge, and dip it in the bucket.

Tips

- Children love to explore buckets of bubbles outdoors. Some will clean everything in sight with the sponges (trikes, riding toys, dolls, chairs, toys, walls, legs and arms)—an experience that helps children learn how to help clean up.
- Keep a bucket of soapy water handy for children to wash hands at any time, without color, but with plenty of bubbles. Toddlers and twos like washing so much that some spend the whole time just playing in the bubbles.

Safety Note: Never leave a child unattended around water.

Variation

- Wash dolls or toys by hand in a washtub filled with bubbly water. Wash dolls' clothes and hang with clothespins on a clothesline at child's height.

Color Bottle Blend



Watch colors blend through a variety of liquids in clear plastic bottles. Toddlers and twos enjoy playing with bottles of color—like a child’s version of lava lamps!



Materials

3 clear plastic bottles with caps
water
1 teaspoon (5 ml) glitter, optional
vegetable oil
white glue, large bottle
food coloring (red, blue, and yellow)
tape

Prepare (Adult)

- Fill each of three empty bottles with different liquids, leaving a little airspace at the top. Fill one with water (and glitter if desired), one with half oil and half water, and one bottle with 1 to 2 cups (240 to 480 ml) of white glue watered down a little. Put three drops of one color of food coloring in each bottle.
- Twist caps on securely. Wrap tape around the caps so children won't open the bottles. (They will try.)

Process (Child) Basic Exploration

- Explore how the color blends in the liquids at different speeds and in different ways.
- Shake, swirl, roll, and explore the bottles in many ways.
- Keep bottles on hand for child's play. Children's interest in these bottles likely will last for days and days.

More Exploration

- Uncap the bottles and add three drops of another color in each bottle (adult only). Make one red and blue, one blue and yellow, and one yellow and red to create three new colors in the bottles. Recap and tape the bottles.
- Roll, shake, and turn the bottles to see the colors blend together as before.
Note: Watch how slowly the colors mix in the glue. (It takes several hours but is interesting to observe!)
- When finished exploring, place bottles in the window and enjoy the light shining through. Glitter will sparkle more, too.

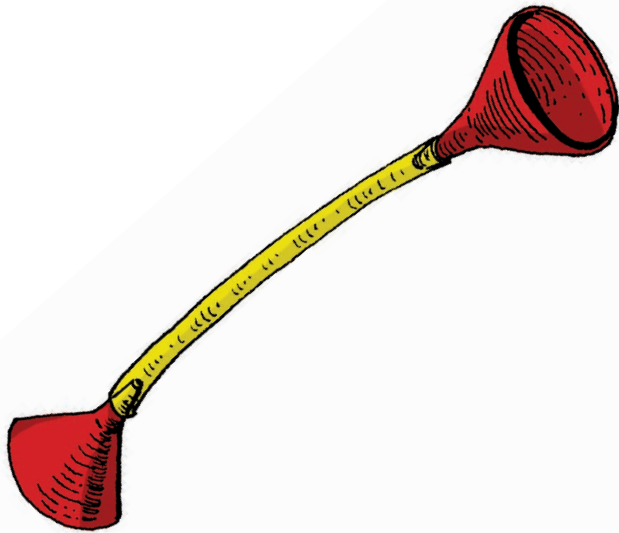
Variations

- Put confetti, grated crayon shavings, marbles, or any other objects in the liquid-filled bottles. Small (but heavy) or shiny items are best. Seal securely.
- Experiment with other liquids in the bottles, such as half water and half cornstarch. Add color, too. Fill a bottle halfway only, with equal parts clear shampoo and opaque conditioner to see layering. Seal securely.

Summertime Color Tube



Inexpensive and quick to make, this color-mixing contraption seems more like science than art, but it's both! Playing outside with colored water makes cleanup easy and allows for worry-free experimenting, discovering, and exploring.



Materials

2 plastic funnels, with a $\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter spout
thick clear plastic tubing, 2'-4' in length
cloth tape or duct tape, optional
food coloring
small plastic cups and pitchers

Prepare (Adult)

- Take the two funnels to an aquarium or garden store to find a good fit for the plastic tubing.
- When ready, take everything outside where a hose is hooked up.
- Insert the two funnels into either end of the clear plastic tubing. Tape the funnels to the tubing if preferred, or leave loose.
- Help children mix food coloring and water in cups.

Process (Child)

- Pour water from the cups into the funnels. The colored water will drain down into the tube, where the children can see the colored water move back and forth.
- Add a different color of water, and see the two colors mix.
- The tube can be emptied at any time and color mixing begun again.

Tips

- The funnels and the tubing must be a good, tight fit.
- Children will get wet, but the food coloring on the lawn should not be a problem.

Variations

- Explore adding bubble solution to the colored cups or pitchers of water. See how bubbly water reacts in the tube.
- A larger, more complicated version of tubes, funnels, and colored water can be designed in any way imaginable. To keep the connecting tube structure as a permanent setup, use plastic cable ties to secure the tubes to pegboard or a chain-link fence.

