

CRAFTING WITH KIDS

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Crafting with kids can be a truly inspiring experience, or a completely exhausting one depending on how you approach it. Whether you have an afternoon of projects planned for one very special kiddo or are hosting a craft party for an entire classroom's worth of tots, there are a few helpful tips that can make crafting with kids a more rewarding and successful experience for everyone involved.



AGE APPROPRIATE PROJECTS

Set your youngsters up for success with a project they can complete. Kids develop hand-eye coordination, dexterity, strength and patience at different ages. Select projects that you think they will enjoy and can finish—or at least make considerable headway on within your allotted crafting time. Children have incredible imaginations and vast creativity. If you think the project you are presenting might be a little beyond their reach, take your time explaining and showing them the steps they need to know. You might just be blown away by what they create!



PRO TIP: Use positive words to encourage them to try new things and to empower them when they have succeeded. Make sure the take-away is a positive one.

PRO TIP: The usual suspects for messy crafts are: finger-paints, homemade bubbles, needle-felting (that wool roving will end up everywhere!) papier mâché and of course, glitter. Glitter spreads like wild fire and seems to never FULLY disappear from the crafty house it's been introduced to—no matter how often you clean. If you love glitter and want your kids to craft with it NO MATTER WHAT AGE, consider making a "glitter station" on a tea tray or designated area outdoors to somewhat contain it.

GOOD CLEAN FUN

Messy crafts are tons of fun (when they are at someone else's house) but don't take all "messy crafts" off the list when hosting a creative activity at your house. Simple steps, such as putting butcher paper or newspaper over the work surface, bringing the paints and materials outside on nice days, and having the kids wear aprons (smocks, oversized T-shirts, or even paper grocery bags) to protect clothing will help prevent the headache that can come with cleaning up after the paint has dried.

BE ORGANIZED. BE SAFE

This should be the number one craft tip when it comes to working with kids on creative projects. Whether you have a craft or sewing room or just a drawer of art supplies, keeping things tidy will make life much easier when you have to juggle the variety of requests that can be hurled at you during a craft date. My nieces will often come over to craft with me and no matter what we are working on, their brains are always ten steps ahead mine. When they request buttons, I know exactly where the buttons are, when they use up all the glue, I always have another bottle on hand. Out of necessity, I've had to organize my jewelry-making materials into two bins; "beads for kids" and "beads to sell." Nothing puts a damper on creativity like stopping everything to either pick out the kid-friendly materials, or worse, go to the store because you ran out of something!



BRING SNACKS

Unless the project you have planned is quick, and I mean QUICK, it seems like project fatigue sets in when the tummies start to rumble. Have crackers, carrot sticks, and other easy snacks ready when the little makers start to shift focus from raiding your fabric bins to raiding your fridge.

PRO TIP: Organization is extremely important when crafting with a large group of kids. Have a clear explanation of steps, taped off areas that are not to be entered by anyone besides you or other adults, and a variety of work stations. Write down the name of the crafter next to each project to make sure no crafts get mixed up.



PRO TIP: Snack time is for you too, Mom and Dad. Treat yourself to a handful of goldfish crackers and a juice box when the little ones need a break.

DEALING WITH DISTRACTIONS AND SHIP-JUMPERS

I've found that when kids of different ages are attending the same crafty event, there is always one who gets easily distracted and want to do something else. When I host craft camps, crafty birthday parties or even just have my friends' kids over to play, there are always a few who want to jump ship and ditch whatever it is we're doing. This is where your individual "parenting style" comes into play. If you are like me, you will encourage your potential ship-jumpers to stick around and work on whatever well planned project everyone else is having fun doing.

LET GO, HAVE FUN

Kids are fun. Crafts are fun. Try not to get wrapped up in the details of what things "should" look like. Let imagination run wild and encourage everyone to play nice, respect the tools, and make it work!



PRO TIP: Whenever possible, take photos of the crafters in action as well as photos of their finished works of art. Photographs are the best way to remember how much fun we had while crafting together and reminds us to do it more often!



PRO TIP: Provide something easy, like those dollar store paint-your-own-ceramic-figurine kits to those who are having a bad day and don't want to participate. Everyone has an off day, but you don't have to let one Grumpy Gus take you down.

