

Miss Katie's Kids Korner

More Craft Projects

by Katie Taylor

To prepare for this column, I asked some of the parents of children in my Kindermusik classes what activities they did with their child at home. Too often, this was a typical day: They would get the older ones off to school, then run some errands, watch a video, have lunch, take a nap, pick up school kids, eat a snack, watch another video, eat dinner, have a bath, go to bed. If this sounds like a typical day in your household, here are a few interactive craft suggestions to occupy your toddler to five-year-old.

The first rule of home craft projects is: FIND A SPACE. Easy clean-up is key to parent-friendly craft projects, so generally the kitchen is the most likely room in the house to set up shop. If you have a separate "children's room" (a.k.a. "wreck-room"), that can be good as well as long as it has a washable floor or a drop cloth. Creativity is messy.

Last month's focus was on home arts & crafts projects for young children. For the toddler-to-5-years set, finger paints and anything to do with water will keep them occupied for hours. But when you start dealing with children ages 7 and up, the projects need to be more structured. There are numerous kits, materials, and projects to be found in books and on websites. However, your older child can create at home with things you might be tempted to throw out. Here are a few ideas to keep them busy.

Following are ten different things you can make from an empty paper towel roll: Rainstick,* "Tooter," Periscope, Wand, Sword, Totem pole, Snake,* Scroll holder, Picture frame, Eye mask.

RAINSTICK –

You will need: Paper towel roll (empty potato chip canister or spaghetti container works well, too), sturdy scissors, strong white glue, water, torn up pieces of newspaper, beans or other filler (popcorn, rice, etc.), strong tape (like duct or packing). Any or all of the following can be used for design: acrylic paint and brushes, wrapping paper, felt, foam cut outs, stickers.

Always start by reinforcing the tube (or any container) with a layer of papier mâché. (Papier Mâché recipe: Mix an equal quantity of glue with water. Glue small torn pieces of newspaper all over the tube. Let dry completely.)

Once the papier mâché is dry, you are ready to create. Paint with acrylic paint or cover with wrapping paper, colored paper, or felt. The design can be your own. After you design, seal one end of the tube with VERY STRONG tape. Fill tube 'til about 1/3 full with "sound" of choice. Then seal the other end with VERY STRONG tape.

SNAKE –

You will need: 1 paper towel roll (toilet paper roll for smaller snakes), scissors, glue, newspaper, water, any or all of the following: acrylic paint, wrapping paper, felt, buttons, feathers, stickers, crayon, marker, etc.

Once you have the tube, the rest is up to you. Unroll the paper towel roll until it looks snake-like. Reinforce your snake shape with papier mâché before decorating.

For the more advanced crafters, here's something you can make from an empty box:

DECOUPAGE BOXES –

You will need: Boxes to decorate, glue, newspaper, paint, paintbrushes, scissors, pictures cut from wrapping paper, magazines, old greeting cards, photographs, water-based varnish.

Step 1: Make sure the box you have chosen is clean inside. Glue on a layer of papier mâché to cover the box. Let it dry thoroughly.

2. When papier mâché layer is dry, paint on a base coat of color. You may need two coats to make a smooth surface to decorate.

3. When the paint is completely dry, the box is ready to decorate. Cut carefully around the pictures, glue on a border and then the feature picture. (This is just a suggestion; the actual design is up to you.)

4. When the glue is set, the box is ready to varnish. It will need two coats to give it a professional finish.

Decoupage is a good lesson in patience. Each drying process will take time. Here is another project to work on while you wait: An original card to give with your hand-made decoupage box

TISSUE PAPER CARDS –

You will need: colored paper, tissue paper, scissors, glue, marker pens (glitter pens or silver and gold pens work well).

Tissue paper cards are made from torn strips or cut shapes of tissue paper which are layered to create blended colors and a simple design. To make: Fold a piece of colored paper in half to form the card. Tear off pieces of different colored tissue paper and use small amounts of glue to stick them onto the card. (You can water down the glue, but be sure to use just a small amount, as the colored paper will bleed.)

Information for the above craft projects was found in 365 Things to Make and Do by Vivienne Bolton.

One more thing about art projects. As children get older, they become very concerned about doing things RIGHT. Here is one "recycled items" project that's just plain fun. As an after school project for third and fourth graders, I gave them plastic garbage bags, construction paper, scissors, tape, balloons, and markers and had them create costumes. Because there was no "right" way to make the costume, there wasn't any wrong way, either. After 30 minutes of frenetic activity, we had a costume parade and shared the smiles of creativity on the move.

There's only one more month before we can go outside again, so enjoy your indoor time. Turn off the videos and start creating.

(Katie Taylor teaches Kindermusik at the Christ Lutheran Church in Ellenville. Spring '04 classes are in session, but there is still time to register. For more information about classes or to contact Miss Katie, you may call 647-7291 or email her at ktville@ulster.net.)

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