

Crafts for the Early Grades



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Welcome to the World of Art!

In this book, you will find a wide selection of creative ideas and projects especially designed for children in the early grades. Creating art together is immensely satisfying and fun, and a wonderful way to spend time with your child.

Art is an expression of our humanity, of our memories, emotions, experiences, and ideals. Engaging in art also supports a child's academic development. It can improve attention and focus, memory, patience and perseverance, and the ability to follow directions, as well as cultivate skills in problem-solving and decision-making, the integration of elements, and manual dexterity. Open-ended art projects, which are process oriented and encourage imagination, help a student integrate feelings, express emotions, and develop a discerning eye.

Perhaps the greatest benefits of all are the joy of sensory exploration and creative self-expression. Simply put, creating art enhances life, so we encourage you to enjoy creating art and sharing the artistic process with your child.

Tips to remember

- Many of the crafts in this book will require the assistance of an adult, so plan your arts and crafts time when you will be available to help as needed.
- Keep in mind that some projects require drying time during the process. This delay in the process can frustrate some children. Be sure to read the instructions all the way through before beginning so you and your child can be properly prepared.
- Create a place to make art and a place to store art supplies so they are easily found when needed. It is more enjoyable to become involved in a messy art project when you don't have to worry about damaging a table or floor.

Whenever possible, you are encouraged to create art alongside your child, sometimes creating your own project and sometimes working together on a single project. Not only will your own artistic efforts encourage your child to be more creative, but you can share ideas and learn from each other. This creative collaboration can establish a foundation that will benefit your child throughout life.

Bean Bags

What you need

- Felt or other sturdy fabric
- Needle and thread
- Small dried beans or lentils

What to do

- 1.** Cut out two round or oval pieces of brightly colored felt or other sturdy fabric. Be sure to cut the fabric larger than you want the resulting bean bag to be.
- 2.** Stitch the pieces together along the sides, leaving a hole big enough to stuff the bag. (Make sure the stitches are close together so the beans or lentils won't fall out.)
- 3.** Use small beans to fill the bag.
- 4.** Stitch it completely closed.

Make three bean bags and try juggling them!



Bird Feeder

What you need

- String
- Large pinecone
- Spoon
- Peanut butter
- Birdseed
- Pie plate
- Newspaper

What to do

- 1.** Spread newspaper on the table.
- 2.** Tie the string very securely to the top stem of the pinecone for a hanger.
- 3.** Spoon peanut butter between the scales of the pinecone.
- 4.** Place birdseed in the pie plate.
- 5.** With your hands, sprinkle the birdseed onto the dabs of peanut butter and push them in if they don't stick easily. You can also roll the pinecone in the plate if you prefer, coating it heavily with seed.
- 6.** Hang the feeder in a tree and watch the birds enjoy their treat!



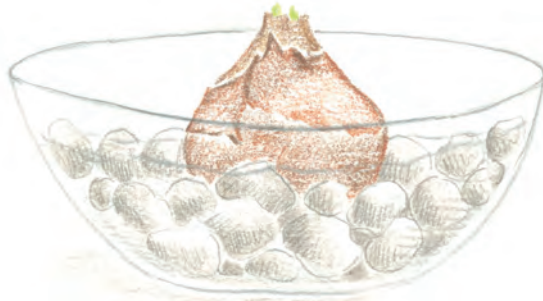
Bird Nest Supply Box

What you need

- Half-gallon milk carton, rinsed and dried
- Heavy string
- Scissors
- Ruler
- Hole punch
- Natural materials such as milkweed and cattail fluff, moss, feathers, sheep or alpaca wool, or snips of hair
- Twig, at least 8 inches long
- Hole punch

What to do

1. Use the ruler to draw a square on two opposite sides of the milk carton. The squares should begin near the top of the milk carton and extend halfway down the sides.
2. Use scissors to carefully cut out the squares.
3. Use a hole punch to make an opening on each side of the carton about 1 inch below the cut-out portion.
4. Insert the twig through the holes. The twig should extend a few inches beyond both sides of the box. This will make a perch for the birds.
5. Thread a piece of string through the openings in the milk carton and tie the ends together.
6. Fill the box with nesting materials for the birds. Make sure to use natural materials, and nothing with chemicals in it, such as dyed yarn.
7. Hang the supply box from a tree near a window, so you can watch birds gather supplies for a nest.



Blooming Bulbs

What you need

- Shallow bowl, about 6–8 inches in diameter
- Narcissus or hyacinth bulbs (these can be purchased at a nursery or garden shop)
- Marbles or pebbles, about $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch in diameter, to fill bowl
- Water



What to do

1. Fill the bowl with marbles or pebbles to within an inch of the top.
2. Place one or more of the bulbs on top of the pebbles with the pointed end facing up. Push the bulb down into the pebbles about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, and arrange a few pebbles around the bulb to support it.
3. Pour water into the bowl until it is just touching the bottom of the bulbs.
4. Place the bowl in a dark cabinet or closet. Add water as needed to keep the bulbs just touching the water. Do not let the bulbs sit in the water.
5. In about a week the leaves will grow an inch above the bulb tip. At this time, you should place the bowl near a sunny window, but not in direct sunlight. Water the bulbs frequently. The flowers will soon appear.
6. The flowers will last longer if you put them in a cool place at night. Water the bulbs until the flowers die, then replant the bulbs outside to enjoy next year.



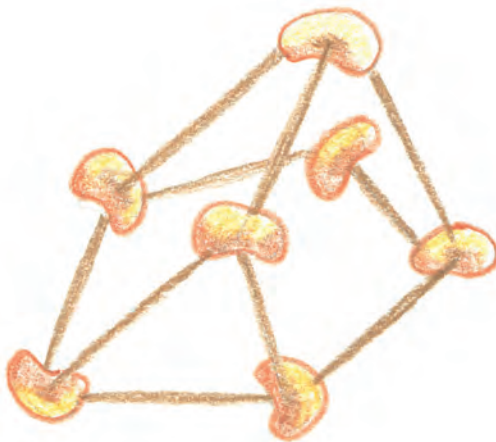
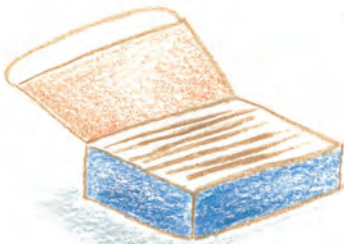
Braided Wheat Wreath

What you need

- Wheat on the stalk. This may be purchased from craft supply stores or from local farmers. Check with county extension offices for names of farmers who grow wheat in your area.
- Tub of water
- Yarn or ribbon
- Glue (optional)
- Seasonal items to decorate wreath, such as leaves or flowers.

What to do

- 1.** Soak the wheat stems in a tub of water for about an hour. Be careful to keep the seed heads out of the water.
- 2.** Work in pairs. One person takes three stalks of wheat and holds them near the seed heads. The other person braids the stems, beginning near the seed heads and continuing down the stalks. Keep the braid fairly tight.
- 3.** Curve the end of the braid around to the seed head. Overlap the ends and tie with a piece of yarn or ribbon.
- 4.** Decorate the wreath with seasonal items, such as brightly colored leaves in autumn or flowers in summer. Insert the leaf or flower stems into the braid or attach with glue.
- 5.** Hang the wreath on the wall or door of your home.
- 6.** To use as a centerpiece, arrange the wreath on a table and place a vase in the center.



Building with Beans

What you need

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of dried beans (limas, pintos, kidney, etc.)
Safety Note: Red kidney beans are poisonous before being cooked.
- Bowl of water
- Colander
- Wooden toothpicks (round ones work best)



What to do

1. Put all the beans together in a bowl and add water to cover them by one or two inches and soak overnight.
2. In the morning, drain the beans in a colander.
3. Stick toothpicks into the beans to build a structure.
4. Allow to dry.