



# Preschool Arts Curriculum

## 25 Essential Lessons

A collaboration between EGL Charitable Foundation,  
Early Starters International and Cassandra Ferland

# Introduction

In the process of learning about the world with fresh eyes, as children do, they have the opportunity to see clearly how wondrous the world around them truly is. They have a natural propensity to delight in everything they are learning. Art making, ideally, is an extension of that delight. It's a prime opportunity to reinforce learning about the world, while introducing new materials and processes that are remarkable and fun in their own right. In addition, young children just beginning to individuate from their caregivers get to tap into creative expression, and begin to take ownership of the product of that expression as an extension of themselves. Art making can be a way to help center young students in their inherent worthiness and allow them to feel a sense of accomplishment and pride.

For children who have had to endure traumatic events and/or chronic stressful environments, tapping into playful exploration through the process of art making can be very healing. The most current science points again and again to the states of awe and wonder as an antidote to a severely taxed nervous system. As art educators, we can do our part by providing an encouraging environment for exploration and offer simple projects or processes that have the potential to elicit the experience of awe or wonder. Thankfully, the world around us does the heavy lifting. Children are inherently fascinated with all manner of natural phenomena: day and night; the sun, moon, and stars; the four seasons; animals; trees, leaves, and flowers; bees making honey; caterpillars turning into butterflies. They also tend to engage deeply when presented with novel or fun materials, and are often more interested in the process and sensory experience than they are the final product. As educators we can lean into that, making sure to weave in “process art” projects often. It's also very important, even when offering a craft project, to keep that same open and welcoming spirit of exploration in regards to the end results. Students may sometimes veer off the obvious path and end up with something unconventional. It can take courage and vision to do something a little differently, and we should encourage that.

This curriculum is an effort to distill countless ideas, mediums, and materials into a group of essential projects for the 2-4yr old range. The overarching themes of the projects are: the four seasons, animals, and process art. The art explorations include: paint, dough, collage, mark making in various ways, and printmaking. All of these projects are very popular amongst young children, and for good reason. They center subjects young children have great interest in, introduce novel materials, and allow opportunities for free expression and moments of simple joy.



# Offering Art Experiences

## **Creating the “container”**

Structure is an important element in art education, but mostly as a way to create a container for the unfolding of each child’s unique experience. Practically, that means first choosing subjects or themes that are interesting and relevant to them, so the art making practice becomes a way to learn about and reflect upon the world around them.

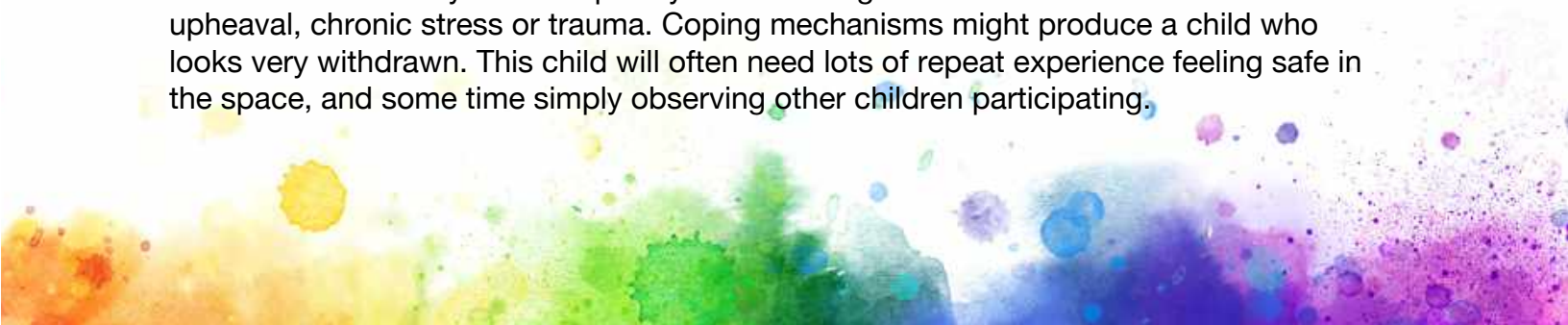
Secondarily, but no less important, is the need to think ahead about how exactly to set up the space and offer materials so that students can feel open and safe to explore and engage without feeling they’ve done something wrong at any point. This might mean waiting to offer access to specific materials until the exact moment they will need it for the project. In the 2-4 year old range, if materials are present on a table, it’s an invitation to play with those materials, and things can get chaotic quickly. I have found offering materials one step at a time to be an effective way to keep students focused on the task at hand. Consider what will work for your art space in order to make containing or cleaning the inevitable mess easy. Maybe it’s a giant roll of butcher paper that gets used to cover the table whenever messy materials are involved, or maybe reusable plastic tablecloths will work best. Muffin tins are a great option to hold liquid paint, as they don’t get easily knocked over. Smocks are a good idea, but I have found that even cheap or used adult t-shirts work perfectly fine to cover children’s clothes and allow them to play freely.

## **Allowing the experience to unfold**

Once the “container” is created, the experiences can unfold in a free and open way. While art for the young helps strengthen fine motor skills, hand eye coordination, and the ability to focus for longer lengths of time, there is a wide range for what is possible for each child in their particular stage of development, and that’s ok. Meet each child where they are, allowing them to practice honing these exact skills. Younger students will naturally produce a “less accurate” representation of crafts than an older preschool student, but as teachers we don’t need to focus on making their crafts look super accurate. We can trust in the process, and instead focus on the quality of their experience. Are they enjoying themselves? That is truly what matters. If a 2 year old doesn’t follow directions exactly and uses the materials in a different way than intended, it’s only a problem if we decide it is. If a student who usually barely touches the materials begins to engage with them at some point, but doesn’t produce anything notable, we can still consider that a win. If we view art time through the lens of experience rather than the lens of output, it can change our perspective and the way we interact with students. Our main job is to be engaging as we present projects and offer options. Our excitement can be infectious, encouraging curiosity about the subject, materials and processes being presented.

## **Trauma and the art experience**

There is an added layer of complexity when dealing with children who have endured upheaval, chronic stress or trauma. Coping mechanisms might produce a child who looks very withdrawn. This child will often need lots of repeat experience feeling safe in the space, and some time simply observing other children participating.



My suggestion is to bring this type of child as close in proximity to the action as they will allow for, even if they aren't themselves engaging in the process. If they seem to begin to warm up to the space, you might offer them one of the materials, especially if it has a sensory element, like tissue or a pom pom. If they show interest, after some time you might gently ask them again if they'd like to participate. Hold a loving and positive space no matter their answer. They should know the door is always open for them to participate if they feel they want to, without feeling pressured.

Trauma can also greatly affect sensory integration, which can drastically alter a child's responses to sensory experience. They might begin to have emotional reactions they did not have prior to trauma to certain sensory experiences of hearing, seeing, smelling or touching things. It might first look like behavioral issues, but upon closer inspection, these children are actually unable to tolerate loud sounds, busy spaces, or tactile sensations. They might not tolerate having messy hands for very long. This is called sensory avoidant. The opposite can happen as well - children will become very hyperactive, seeking as much movement and tactile input as possible. This is called sensory seeking. Thankfully, both types of children will benefit from as much input as they can tolerate. As art educators, we can do our part by providing plenty of opportunity for children to get visual and tactile input. All the projects that involve touching novel materials (snow, tissues, balloons, playdough, and shaving cream are perfect examples) help sensory integration. Children who are sensory avoidant will benefit from exposure to these materials for as long as they will tolerate it, and given accommodations where possible to stay involved. That might look like cleaning off a child's hands, and offering a toddler paint-brush so they may still engage with the messy material if they so chooses. Over time they will become more and more desensitized as their systems regulate and mature.

The major takeaway is that in many ways, the experience can bend to the needs of the children in front of you. Our adult inclination is to be invested in a final product, but it's really the experiences that most benefit our students.



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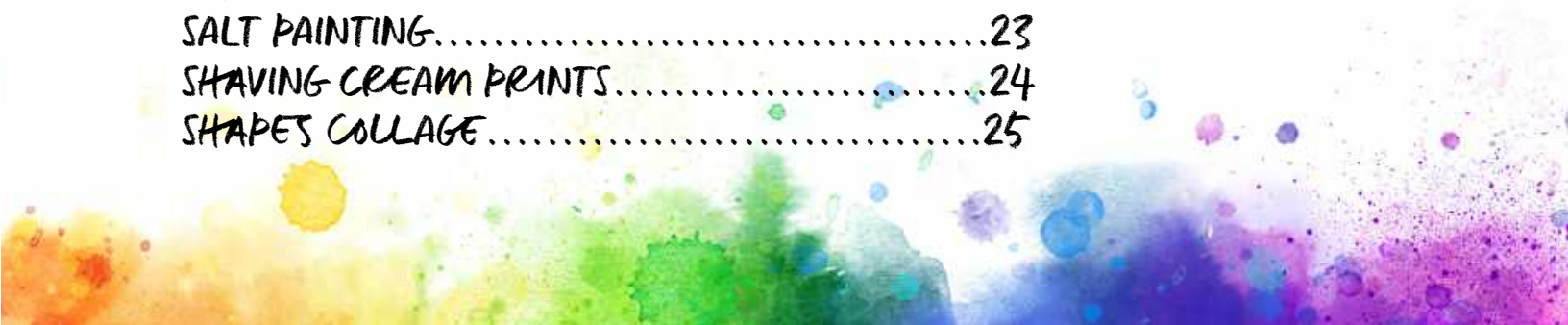
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# FLOWER PRINTS



## Objectives

- Experiment with printing
- Explore paint and mark making with a new tool
- Introduction to shape and texture
- Use as an extension activity for spring or summer themes, discussion of flowers and flower parts

## Materials

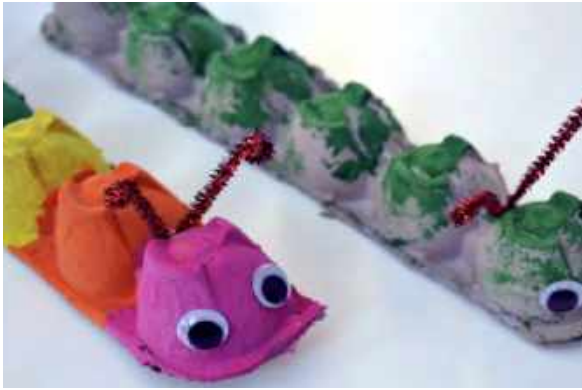
- Empty toilet paper rolls
- Other materials to make the center of flower: cotton balls, Q tips, bottle caps, foam, sponge, dot stickers or dot markers
- Paper
- Acrylic or tempura paints

## Instructions

A simple project with just a few supplies and a little prep that children always love. And the flower stamps can be saved and used again!

- Prepare paper roll flower stamps ahead of time: draw petals on one side of a roll, all the way around. Cut the roll and bend back the petals. As you prepare the options, explore variations of petal shape and length in order to create at least 2 or 3 distinct flower shapes. It's a good idea to have a few of each kind of flower stamp available, especially with larger groups. Ideally there would be at least as many stamps as there are students, so everyone can have one at any given time.
- Give every student a piece of paper for their first print.
- Set out a few paint colors, each on their own paper plate, and allow students to explore dipping a flower stamp in paint and pressing onto their paper. Encourage them to notice the different textures that come from the process, as well as the difference that comes from pressing down each petal one by one onto the paper with their fingers as they make the print.
- Sometimes prints will come out with every petal showing, and other times not. This variation is welcome, as it often gives more visual interest to the final product. That being said, for students who are struggling to make prints, they might need some direction to spend more time pressing down the petals into the paint or onto the paper.
- After they have made their larger flower shapes, students can play with stamping the middle of their flowers with whatever materials you have on hand.

# COLORFUL CATERpillars



## Objectives

- Explore creating art in 3 dimensions
- Experiment with paint and/or color
- Strengthen fine motor skills
- Use as an extension activity for spring themes

## Materials

### Egg carton caterpillar:

- Half an egg carton per child
- Acrylic paint in green and other colors
- Pipe cleaners
- Optional googly eyes or markers

### Popsicle stick caterpillar:

- Popsicle sticks
- Pom poms
- Glue
- Optional pipe cleaners
- Optional googly eyes or markers for eyes, mouth

## Instructions

If time and materials allow for a slightly more involved project, the egg carton caterpillar variation of this project is great fun! For this variation:

- Prepare egg cartons: cut egg cartons in half the long way. Each carton will create two 6 segment “caterpillars”. They can also be cut down to 5 segments, using leftovers for another project.
- Cut pipe cleaners into 2 or 3 inch strips and fold in half.
- Set down newsprint or butcher paper on the table, and set out paint and brushes.
- Allow students to paint their caterpillars in any colors they choose. Younger students especially likely won’t paint the entire cardboard, and that’s ok.
- Once dry, they can add eyes and antenna. The antenna can be pushed into the egg carton just after the “head”.

If you need a simpler, tidier project that doesn’t include paint, and has little to no prep, the popsicle stick caterpillar is the ticket. For this variation:

- Set out the popsicle sticks, pom poms, and glue.
- Pom poms can be all one size, or if you have two different sizes, the larger ones can be reserved for the head of the caterpillar.
- Allow students to choose the color pom poms they prefer for their caterpillars. Playing in the pom pom bin tends to be one of their favorite parts!
- Direct students to add glue to their popsicle stick and add their pom poms one by one.
- Set out pipe cleaners cut into 2 inch strips and bent in half. Younger students may need help placing them between the head and the stick, or using enough glue there so everything adheres.

# WATERCOLOR BUTTERFLIES



## Objectives

- Explore color mixing
- Experiment with cause and effect
- Strengthen fine motor skills
- Celebrate uniqueness (no two butterflies will be exactly the same)
- Use as an extension activity for spring themes

## Materials

- Coffee filters
- Clothespins
- Markers
- Optional liquid watercolors or food dye in water
- Pipe cleaners
- Pipettes
- Optional googly eyes
- Optional glue

## Instructions

- Prepare a surface you don't mind getting wet: a sheet of wax paper per student works well.
- Prepare coffee filters: stack two on top of each other for each student.
- Cut pipe cleaners in half.
- If using markers, set them out, encouraging students to color all over the filter.
- Using droppers or pipettes, allow students to add water to their filter and watch how the colors begin to run and mix!
- If using liquid watercolors or food dye instead, the previous two steps will be combined into one, and students can use pipettes with different colors to drop liquid color all over their coffee filter. The texture of the filter creates a slow spreading of the color which is very interesting to watch.
- Separate the layers of coffee filters and set aside to dry.
- While the coffee filters are drying, students can use marker to color all sides of their clothespin, add googly eyes if available, and choose a pipe cleaner for the antenna.
- Once the coffee filters are dry, take the two layers and pinch each at its center, folding it in to itself at that point. Stack them one on top of the other, and clip the clothespin onto the coffee filters where you were pinching them.
- Gently spread the filters up and down to expand the four wings of the clothespin butterfly.
- Students can choose a pipe cleaner and slip it into the top of the clothespin to keep the antenna in place. A little glue can also be used at that end to make more secure.



# UKRAINIAN EGG DECORATING

Watercolor and Crayon Resist



## Objectives

- Engage in exploration with paint, color blending, and the resist process
- Optional: play with creating pattern
- Use as an extension activity for spring themes

## Materials

- White paper- cardstock, watercolor, or whatever you have on hand
- White and Yellow crayons
- Watercolors
- Optional: various sized paintbrushes

## Instructions

This project is a fun way to introduce a spring or Easter theme. It can also be fun to talk about the life cycle of a bird: from egg to hatching, to a baby bird, and then a bird who can fly!

- Prep paper ahead of time: using your own template, trace and cut out a large egg shape for as many students as you have. Depending on the thickness of your paper, you can stack the sheets of paper together to cut many at a time. You might even allow for more than one per student, as once they go through the process once and see the reveal of their design, students often want to repeat the process and explore it further.
- Pass out the egg shaped paper to your students.
- Set out yellow and white crayons, and allow students to make designs. You might use a chalkboard or something similar and show examples of fun patterns they could use, like lines, dots, circles, or zig zags.
- Older students will likely engage to some degree with the pattern making, while young students will just enjoy the mark making and reveal process.
- Set out watercolor paint. I also like to offer different size paint brushes so students can explore the differing effect.
- You might excitedly point out the reveal of their mark making as students paint.
- If you have time or materials, allow students to repeat the process!



# RAIN CLOUD

Paint and collage



## Objectives

- Sensory fun with cotton balls
- Experiment with finger or drip painting
- Explore interplay between 2D and 3D
- Use as an extension activity for spring and weather themes

## Materials

### For All :

- White or Blue construction paper or cardstock
- Watered down Glue mix and brushes
- Acrylic or Tempura paint (in tones of blue for rain)

**Method 1 Additions:** Streamers (in rainbow colors or blue/s)

### Method 2 Additions:

- Cotton balls
- Optional droppers if doing that variation

## Instructions

This project can be done in many ways! Do what works for your group, and allow students the chance to enjoy the tactile nature of the materials at each step! Decide if you want the final piece to be a distinct cloud object, or a 3D picture on paper or cardstock, and go from there.

### Method 1: Cloud Object (Picture 1)

- Prep a thicker paper/cardstock to cut out cloud shapes ahead of time.
- Set out paint in blue tones, so students can use their fingertips to paint little dots all over their cloud. Alternatively, set out paint brushes and watered down glue, and direct students to paint the entire surface of their cloud. Then set out cotton balls, so they can add them, creating a 3 dimensional element to their cloud.
- While their creations dry, pass out a piece of streamer in around 2" length to each child, encouraging them to play a bit with the movement it makes, waving and twirling it, etc.
- Direct students to turn over their clouds, adding glue to the bottom of the cloud, and then pasting their streamer to one end. They can continue to add streamers as you make them available. They can be all dark blue, or rainbow colors is also nice.

### Method 2: 3D Picture (Pictures 2/3)

- Prep the paper or cardstock for each student by creating a quick template to trace a cloud shape at the top.
- Direct students to paint their cloud shape with watered down glue, and then add cotton balls to create their cloud shape. Or they can dip their cotton balls into glue and paste.
- Now students can finger paint rain drops. Alternatively, with droppers add watered down paint or food coloring so students can lift their paper at the end and watch all the drops drip downward.

# CLASSROOM RAINBOW

Group Painting Project / Hand Painting



## Objectives

- Engage in a sensory experience with paint, paintbrushes
- Explore the effects of color mixing
- Color matching
- Partake in a group art making experience

## Materials

- Large piece of paper
- Markers in rainbow colors
- Any washable, opaque paint in rainbow colors
- Paper plates for paint
- Optional add-on project supplies: individual sheets of paper, paint brushes

## Instructions

- Prep a large piece of paper ahead of time, ideally white but could also be butcher paper.
- Use the colored markers to create a rainbow colored guide, and add an arch in each color. Starting with purple as the smallest arch, then blue, green, yellow, orange, and red.
- You can put out one color at a time for students, allowing them to press their hands into the paint, and add their handprints to the line of the same color.
- Encourage them to have no fear in overlapping with the handprints - this creates a really interesting effect!
- As you move on to other colors, have them notice the colors blending together.
- Once the group project is finished, you now have a wonderful symbol of what can be done together, with cooperation and everyone's participation. It also doubles as beautiful classroom decor!

## Optional Add-on

- Since the students will already have messy hands at this point, it can be nice to prep another station ahead of time that allows students to use a paintbrush and use whatever colors they like to paint one hand. Once they are happy with it, they can create a print (or prints) on an individual sheet of paper that they can take home.
- They are usually more interested in the process of painting and printing than the end result, and that is fine! It is nice to have a little memento to take home or gift to parents.



# FRUIT PRINTS

## Sponge Printing and Finger Painting



### Objectives

- Experiment with printing
- Explore paint and mark making with fingers
- Introduction to shape and texture
- Use as an extension activity for spring or summer themes, discussion of shape, counting, or types of fruit

### Materials

- Sponges- triangle and strawberry shaped
- Paint- red, black, green. Any craft paint like acrylic or tempura will work well
- Paper plates for paint
- Paper or Cardstock

### Instructions

This process is very versatile and can be used for so many different projects!

- Prepare sponges ahead of time: cut triangles and strawberry shapes. Students can share sponges, but it is easier if there is at least one sponge for every child. 10 children = 5 of each type of sponge.
- Give every student a piece of paper for their first print.
- Set out the red paint on a paper plate and allow students to explore dipping their sponge in paint and pressing onto their paper. Encourage them to notice the different textures that come from the process.
- Set out the green paint, and allow students to use their fingers to create the top of their fruit.
- Set out the black paint, and show students how to use their pinky finger to add little dots over the red to create seeds (watermelon) or surface texture (strawberries).
- It is ok if students veer away from instructions at certain points, and also make other marks on their paper. It is more important that they are interested and involved in the process than the final product look exactly like the picture.
- Once everyone is done with their first print, set those aside to dry, and hand out fresh sheets of paper.
- Allow students to practice the process once again, this time with the other sponge shape. Often once they get the hang of a particular process, students really begin to experiment with texture, mark making, or composition.



# BALLOON PAINTING

Process Art // Optional Rainbows



## Objectives

- Engage in exploration with paint, texture, and simple printmaking
- Color recognition
- Optional color matching element
- Hand Eye Coordination

## Materials

- Balloons (will need a medley of colors if adding the color matching element)
- Paper- larger format is better
- Washable paint
- Optional: small tupperware or shoe box to contain each child's balloons
- Optional: markers for arches

## Instructions

- Prep balloons ahead of time: blow up balloons to just big enough to fit in little hands and tie off.
- Set out paper. This could be done as a group project on butcher paper on a table, or individual to allow each their own project.
- Set out paper plates with one paint each. If mess is a concern, you can put the plates out one or two at a time.
- If you want to add the color matching element to the project, give each student a small container with balloons for each color of paint they will use.
- Allow students to dip their balloon in paint and stamp on paper.

Younger children will be delighted with the process, and it may be plenty to go from color to color, allowing them to find their corresponding balloon to begin to print.

## Optional Add-on

**If you want to add a rainbow element to the project:**

- This can be done collectively on one sheet of paper or individually.
- Draw arches on each paper as a guide, using markers that correspond to the paint colors they will use. The largest arch will be purple, then blue, green, yellow, orange and red.
- Show students how to add dots all along the lines in the same color.



# LEAF PRINTING

Printmaking and Nature fun



## Objectives

- Engage in exploration with paint, color blending, and the printing process
- Explore natural materials
- Use as an extension activity for nature or fall themes

## Materials

- Fall leaves
- Paper (thicker card stock or textured watercolor paper gives more detailed prints)
- Paint (tempura is recommended)
- Brayer or roller pins (optional)
- Spray bottle with water, or sponge (optional)
- If creating leaf “friends”, have markers, googly eyes, glue, or popsicle sticks available. This could be very simple or be more involved.

## Instructions

- If possible, a nature walk is a wonderful way to involve students in gathering leaves. You can discuss all the variety in shapes and size that the group finds. This can be done the same day or a different day as the art project.
- Each student chooses a leaf to print.
- Put out paints, perhaps in fall colors, and allow students to paint their leaves. Sponges, brushes, or foam brushes would all work here.
- If using thicker paper, gently spray each paper to dampen. This allows for better detail transfer onto the paper. Older students will enjoy doing this themselves. A sponge is a good option for younger students.
- Show students how to put the leaf, painted side down, onto the paper, and use the brayer or roller to go over it a few times. If no rollers are available, they will have to press using their hands. Emphasize that they will need to try to press every part of their leaf.
- Pull up the leaf, and see the print!
- Multiple prints could be made with the same leaf, or different leaves could be used for variety.

## Optional Add-on

- Once the leaves are dry, another fun option is to allow students to add eyes and a face to their painted leaves to create a leaf “friend”. Popsicle sticks are also an option to adhere the leaf to, and are especially nice if the leaf is smaller or has a small stem.



# SPIDER SCULPTURE

## Sensory Play



### Objectives

- Engage in sensory play
- Hand eye coordination and fine motor skills
- Create in 3 Dimensions
- Encourages imaginative play
- Use as an extension activity for fall, counting, or insects/spider themes

### Materials

- Playdough
- Black pipe cleaners
- Googly eyes
- Optional - silver glitter
- Optional - random tools from the classroom to interact with playdough

### Recipe for Playdough

2 cups plain (all purpose) flour  
2-3 tablespoons oil (any)  
2 tablespoons cream of tartar  
1/2 cup salt  
1 cup boiling water  
2 teaspoons black gel food colouring (mixed into the water)

### Instructions

- This is a fun and easy project, but does require making playdough ahead of time. It's an easy process though! The recipe is below. **If an alternative is necessary, you can substitute one cup from a paper egg carton as the body of the spider, and have students paint that instead. Young students will need pre-made holes to insert and twist the pipe cleaners so they are secured.**
- Prep the pipe cleaners by cutting them in half and bending them.
- Half the fun of this project is playing with the playdough! Give each student a chunk and encourage students to experiment with it: squish it in their fingers, flatten it, pull it apart.
- Eventually show students how to roll their playdough in their hands to create a ball shape.
- Show students a pre-made model of the spider, pointing out the 8 legs, 4 on each side, and 8 eyes.
- It may be helpful to prep cups or trays ahead of time for each student, with 8 pipe cleaners and 8 googly eyes, that can be given to them at this point.

### Making Playdough

Mix the dry ingredients in a bowl. Add the oil and mix well. Now add the gel food colouring to the boiling water and stir until combined. Add this gradually to the dry ingredients, stirring until fully combined. When cool enough to touch, take the ball of play dough out of the bowl and knead it on a lightly floured surface until all of the stickiness has gone. Expect it to take a few minutes!

At this stage, you might sprinkle on some silver glitter to make it sparkle! It should be soft and pliable, ready for play. It can be stored in a plastic container for future use.

# ALL ABOUT SNOW

## Process Art Ideas



### Objectives

- Experiment with new materials
- Sensory experience
- Strengthen fine motor skills + hand eye coordination
- Use as an extension activity for winter

### Materials

#### Method 1:

- Plastic storage container
- Small plastic bowls or plastic cups for paint
- Large toddler paint brushes
- Food coloring or liquid watercolors

#### Method 2:

- Colored construction paper (perhaps blue or black)
- White and Blue paint (acrylic/tempura)
- Variety of Pom poms (glitter style)
- Clothespins

### Instructions

No winter theme would be complete without bringing snow to the forefront! These two ideas are the simple and great for all ages. It could also be a great idea to start with the first variation and allow students to explore actual snow, and then the next week offer the second variation, a project where they are making a representation of snow.

#### Method 1:

- This is an easy outdoor project. If indoors, use a large plastic storage container per group of 4-5 students.
- If you are worried about drips, put a towel or drop cloth under each bin.
- Add small containers of liquid color to the bin, securing them into the snow.
- Encourage students to explore different ways of “painting the snow”.
- Just as the art play is coming to a close, think of it as a winter nature sensory bin, and introduce some small toys to the bin. Encourage students to play in a more tactile fashion with the snow.

#### Method 2:

- Attach the pom poms to the clothes pins. You can hot glue them to each clothes pin if you think students will try to separate, or you can just pinch the pom pom. It's optional but recommended to get “glitter” pom poms, as they add a wonderful texture.
- Pass out the construction paper to students, and set out the dishes of blue and white paint.
- Allow them to create their scene of “snow falling”. Students might simply make pom pom prints, or begin to experiment with moving the pom pom around to create a different kind of mark making.





# STARRY NIGHT

Watercolor + Salt Paintings



## Objectives

- Engage in exploration with watercolor and salt
- Explore color interplay
- Hand Eye Coordination
- Discover the resist technique

## Materials

- Watercolor paper, cut into smaller squares and rectangles, about 3x4" each (or you can size to make into cards)
- Small star stickers. A variety of sizes or types can add extra dimension
- Watercolor paint (either liquid or paint pods) and brushes
- Coarse salt
- Masking or washi tape

## Instructions

There is no wrong way to paint the sky! The “reveal” aspect of this project is quite fun for students. Young children may need a little help with that aspect.

- Prep paper: cut the watercolor paper sheets into smaller squares and rectangles, about 3x4" each. Or you can use blank cards, or create a blank card from paper.
- I recommend taping the paper down to the table, to keep them stable and to give them a lovely white border.
- Add stickers: allow students to stick the star stickers onto card in any design they like.
- Put out watercolors in night sky shades, like blue, black and purple.
- Allow the students to paint over the watercolor paper and stickers. Encourage them to completely cover the paper.
- While the paint is still very wet, put out the salt so the students can sprinkle over the painting.
- Encourage them to notice how the salt crystals begin drawing the wet watercolors to them, creating a dappled effect.
- Allow to fully dry.
- Gently dust the salt off each paper, and then allow children to peel away some or all of the star stickers. Most of the stickers will have resisted the paint, creating a lovely effect.



# PAPER PLATE MOONS

## Sensory Play



### Objectives

- Engage in sensory and textural exploration with homemade “puffy paint”
- Hand Eye Coordination
- Use as an extension activity for themes like space or shapes

### Materials

- Paper plates
- Homemade puffy paint
- A variety of paintbrushes (foam brushes and cotton swabs are also nice options)
- Optional plastic cups for an easy, contained way to serve to students

### Recipe for Puffy Paint

- 1 part white glue
- 1-2 parts foam style shaving cream (the more cream the puffier the paint)
- Small amount of black or blue paint or food coloring
- Optional silver or blue glitter (used sparingly)

### Instructions

This project is all about sensory play! Most of the fun is in playing with the puffy paint. If it's a hit with your students, there are so many fun projects that can be done with it.

If you are short on time or want less prep, these can be done with full paper plates. You can also consider cutting crescent shapes, or providing a mix of the two so students can choose or do both. The phases of the moon could also be a part of the discussion.

- Prep puffy paint ahead of time. This can be gray or bluish toned.
- Prep a table with newsprint, butcher paper, or plastic table cloth.
- Pass out the paper plates and the containers of puffy paint.
- Allow the students to paint their plate, encouraging them to completely cover the plate, experiment with different types of brushes and mark making, and even use their fingers.
- The thinner layered plates generally take about 3-4 hrs to dry. If the paint is thicker, it might take up to 24 hrs to dry.

You don't need a ton of the paint. With 1/2 cup of the recipe, you can paint about 5 full paper plate moons.

- Add the full amount of glue to the bowl, and begin to add in the shaving cream slowly, gently mixing as you go.
- Once mixed evenly, add the coloring of your choice, one small dollop at a time. A little goes a long way. Black paint becomes gray.
- If desired, add glitter and stir to distribute. Glitter can also be added by each student after painting.
- Puffy paint can be made up to a few days before, and stored in a plastic container for future use.



# SNOWMAN PRINTS

Sponge Painting and collage



## Objectives

- Experiment with printing, collage
- Explore paint and mark making with fingers
- Hand Eye Coordination and Fine Motor Skills
- Introduction to shape, texture, size
- Use as an extension activity for winter themes, discussion of shape and size

## Materials

- Pieces of cardboard or black or blue construction paper
- Any kind of washable paint in white
- Paper plates for paint
- Sponges cut in circle shape
- Glue
- Whatever collage material is available: buttons, yarn, google eyes, construction paper or patterned paper or fabric in shapes for arms, nose, or eyes

## Instructions

This is a fun winter activity. Remember that young children especially are still working on their motor skills and coordination and the placement of the sponge prints and/or collage materials will likely be unique to them. Welcome that!

- If using cardboard, prep ahead of time in similar size square or rectangle shapes.
- Gather or prep any collage materials you want to put out ahead of time.
- Cut simple sponges in circle shapes for printing. All can be the same size, or there can be one larger and one smaller circle.
- It can be helpful to make a snowman ahead of time to show and discuss the project before starting.
- Set out plates with white paint and the sponges, and allow students to begin printing circles onto their paper to create their snowmen.
- For younger students it may be preferable to stick with one size circle, simply working to print the circles in a stack. Otherwise, you may set out the larger circles first, guiding students to start with bottom circle before moving on to the smaller one.
- Once their circle printing is done, they can move on to finger painting little “snowflake” dots all around their paper.
- Reset the table with glue and collage materials, and by then the circle prints will hopefully be dry enough to move on. They don’t need to be fully dry.
- Discuss the other features we often see on snowmen that they might want to add to their picture. Eyes, nose, arms, buttons, scarves, or hats are all great ideas.

# COLORFUL NIGHT OWLS

Watercolor and collage



## Objectives

- Engage in exploration with watercolor paint on newsprint
- Explore color mixing
- Explore simple pattern making
- Hand Eye Coordination
- Discover the collage technique
- Use as an extension activity for forest animal, nocturnal animals, or bird themes

## Materials

- Construction paper- black, orange, white
- Newspaper
- Watercolors (liquid or dry cakes)
- Paintbrushes
- Markers (metallic or glitter are a fun option)
- Glue
- Optional large googly eyes

## Optional Template

<https://iheartcraftythings.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/fathers-day-kids-craft-owl-pattern-new.compressed.pdf>

## Instructions

- Prep newsprint ahead of time: using your own template or the one provided, trace and cut out shapes for the owl body, wings, and large circles for eyes.
- Prep eyes/nose: cut triangles out of the orange construction paper, and if not using googly eyes, smaller circles out of white paper
- Prep the table, and then set out the watercolors (either liquid in different containers or the dry cakes with some water on the side) with paintbrushes.
- Giving students the body shape in newsprint, encourage them to choose colors they love to paint their owl, and to watch the color mixing that happens during the process.
- While the bodies dry, give students the wings and set out markers. You can show an example of a pattern to create feathers, while allowing them to make any marks they like on the wings. They might choose to continue to paint on the wings instead.
- If not using googly eyes, give students the white circles and let them create their eyes with markers.
- Hand out a sheet of black construction paper to each student, and set out some paper plates with watered down glue and fresh thick style paintbrushes.
- Once the bodies are relatively dry, students can paint the backs with glue, and then place the body on their black paper.
- Then they can add glue and place the newsprint circles where they want eyes to go, and the handmade or googly eyes on top of those.
- Students can glue on the wings and the triangle noses, adding any other finishing touches on the bodies that they want to.

# PAPER PLATE LIONS

## Tissue Paper Collage



### Objectives

- Engage in exploration with acrylic paint and tissue paper
- Hand Eye Coordination
- Discover the collage technique
- Use as an extension activity for animal, jungle, or shape themes

### Materials

- Paper plates
- Yellow and orange acrylic paint
- Yellow and orange tissue
- A mix of half water, half glue
- White paper circles (eyes)
- Optional black triangle (nose)
- Black markers

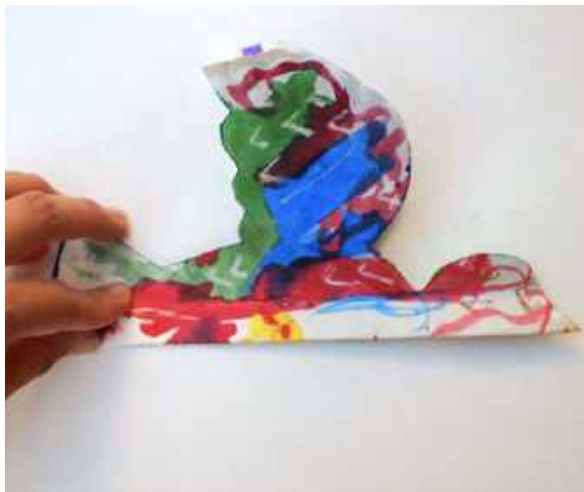
### Instructions

Lions are the “king of the jungle”, strong and powerful. Children need to feel strong and powerful too, and they don’t often get the chance. I find students love to play with these like masks, pretending to be powerful, and roaring like a lion!

- Prep tissue paper ahead of time: cut orange and yellow paper sheets into smaller rectangles, for easy tearing. Or you can fully prepare strips ahead of time, making long strips. A mix of both might be a good idea, so students have the opportunity to tear some strips on their own while having plenty of tissue strips to fall back on.
- Prep eyes/nose: cut circles (and optional triangles) out of paper for eyes.
- Set out yellow and orange acrylic with large toddler paint brushes or sponges.
- Allow the students to paint their plate, encouraging them to completely cover the plate.
- In order to allow the plates to dry a little bit, pull out the tissue paper and show students how to tear strips. This is usually a simple but fun part of the session for students. To keep things tidy, each student might have a small receptacle for their finished strips.
- Put out the mix of glue and water, and give each student a clean paint brush. Demonstrate creating the mane of the lion by placing a tissue strip on the plate, and then dipping the brush into the mix and brushing on top of the tissue strips, one by one.
- Once students are done with the mane, put out the white circles, black triangles, and markers, giving students the option to make the face of the lion with collage or mark making.

# PAPER PLATE BIRDS

Watercolor and Crayon Resist



## Objectives

- Engage in exploration with paint, color blending, and the resist process
- Optional: play with creating pattern
- Work in 3 dimensions
- Use as an extension activity for learning about birds, forest animals, etc.

## Materials

- Paper plates
- Stapler, pen, scissors to create birds
- Yellow and white crayons for the resist
- Washable paint; liquid watercolor is recommended here

## Instructions

Harness the wonder of seeing a bird in flight for the first time with this colorful project!

- Prep the paper plate birds ahead of time: fold a paper plate in half. sing the straight side of the plate as the bottom of the bird, trace a simple shape of a bird in side view. Staple the plate shut length-wise, at the midpoint of the bird's body. Then cut the bird shape out of the paper plate. This can be done with a template, or the first one you make can serve as a tracing template for the others.
- Now the paper plate bird wings can be folded down, to reveal a top surface to the bird.
- Give each student a bird, showing them how the wings can move, and pointing out each surface - both the top and sides of the bird can be used for mark making and painting.
- Set out yellow and white crayons, and allow students to make designs. You might show examples of fun patterns, like lines, dots, circles, or zig zags, that they could use on their bird if they so choose.
- Set out paint. Any paint will do, but I like to use liquid watercolors for this project. They are vibrant, spread easily, and blend together well. I also like to offer different size paint brushes so students can explore the different ways they apply paint. Larger brushes for more color coverage, and smaller brushes for details and small areas.
- You can point out the reveal of their crayon marks as students paint.
- Once dry, students now have something that doubles as an art creation and a fun toy! In my experience, younger students engage in pretend play with them, and older students love to try to make them fly! (like a paper airplane)

# GLITTER FISH



## Objectives

- Explore color mixing
- Experiment with glitter glue/paint as a medium
- Hand Eye Coordination
- Use as an extension activity for underwater or ocean themes

## Materials

- White construction paper or cardstock
- Glitter glue or glitter paint (blue and green make for good aquatic colors)
- Large toddler paint brushes
- Glue
- Large popsicle sticks
- Googley eyes (or markers)
- Optional: sequins (large size are best for small hands)

## Instructions

- Prep paper ahead of time: make a simple fish template and use to cut out as many as you need. Thicker paper is best, if possible, to hold the form. A good size for the fish can be found by folding a 8.5x11” piece of construction or cardstock in half, and trying to take up the majority of that space. Stacking a few folded sheets together before cutting makes quick work of the prep.
- Hand out a fish and large popsicle stick to each child.
- Set out the glue, and allow students to add glue to the top portion of their popsicle stick and glue their fish onto it. Very young students might need help with this part.
- Set out the glitter glue or paint along with large toddler paint brushes.
- Allow the students to paint their fish, encouraging them to experiment with varying thicknesses to the paint, as well as color. Some students will paint the entire paper, and some will only paint a portion. This is fine!
- When students feel they are done with the glitter glue, they can move on to adding the eye. There is also the option to add sequins, if available.
- Once dry, students often love to play with their fish, making it move around and “swim”.



# PAPER ROLL OCTOPUS

Working in 3D, Paint



## Objectives

- Engage in exploration with paint on a 3D surface
- Create in 3 dimensions
- Encourages imaginative play
- Use as an extension activity for summer or ocean themes

## Materials

- Toilet paper and/or Paper towel Rolls
- Acrylic or Tempura Paint
- Optional Glitter paint
- Markers or Googly eyes
- Glue (if using googly eyes)
- Large and small paintbrushes
- Small containers for paint

## Instructions

- Prep paper rolls ahead of time: if using paper towel rolls, cut them approximately the same length as a toilet paper roll. Then make a series of cuts length-wise up each roll, 2/3 of the way down. Use your hands to bend the “arms” upwards to create the octopus.
- Prep your tables with butcher paper or tablecloths.
- Set out paint. Allow students to choose a color for their octopus, and direct them to use their large brush to paint the exterior of their paper roll.
- Younger children might not paint the entire surface of the octopus. Encourage all students to apply lots of paint all around, pointing out all the little arms, while also being open and allowing students to be finished with the painting process whenever is right for them.
- For slightly older children, they might challenge their attention span and dexterity to paint some of the interior.
- Optional: once they are finished with their main color, you might extend the project to allow them to choose a different color paint to give spots to the arms of the octopus. Glitter paint is nice for this purpose.
- If students want to add eyes or a mouth, you can set out the markers or glue and googly eyes.





# PAPER TOWEL PAINTINGS

## Watercolor Process Art



### Objectives

- Explore color mixing
- Experiment with cause and effect
- Strengthen fine motor skills
- Use as an extension activity for color identification

### Materials

- Paper towels
- Food coloring or liquid watercolors
- Pipettes/droppers
- Toddler paintbrushes

### Instructions

This process art project could not be simpler, but is always a hit! The fabric of the paper towel absorbs the liquid and the colors move and blend with one another.

- Prepare the table to contain the mess. Butcher paper or a plastic tablecloth is a good large table option, or you can use trays or wax paper per student.
- Set out the paper towels, and the pipettes/droppers, and large toddler paintbrushes.
- Set out the liquid color. Baby food jars and yogurt containers are a favorite because you can add the lid and save for future artmaking. Ice cube trays can also work.
- Allow students to choose colors and drop them onto their paper towel.
- Young students might benefit from no more than 3 color choices. Keeping that simple encourages engagement with the actual process.
- Encourage students to watch the colors spread and mix.



# PLAYDOUGH PORTRAITS

Sensory play, Working in 3D



## Objectives

- Engage in sensory play
- Work on hand eye coordination and fine motor skills
- Create in 3 Dimensions
- Encourage social emotional learning and expression

## Materials

- Playdough or Salt dough (self drying)
- A variety of items that you have access to that could be used as features: cut up straws, cut up pipe cleaners, foam pieces, buttons, googly eyes, dried pasta, rocks, acorns or other natural materials (Method 1)
- Dried pasta in many shapes and sizes, (Method 2)

## Instructions

Playdough is an amazing sensory play tool, and this project allows for the ability to bring in a personal element (self portrait or family portrait) or even a social emotional element (faces of different emotions) if appropriate. For the latter, having example pictures on hand of faces showing emotions is a good idea. This project can be done with regular playdough, or if you really want a finished project they can take home, salt clay. It will dry and harden in 1-2 days. Whether you go with method 1 or 2, you will need containers or a platter with sections to hold the different materials, or you can set up individual stations on trays for each child in order to contain the materials. You can choose to use dried pasta in many shapes and sizes for creating the features, or use whatever you have on hand. You could also gather natural materials like rocks, acorns, and sticks.

- Give each student 2-3 balls of playdough. They can all be the same color, although different colors is fun. Allow them to use their hands, rolling pins, or even printing rollers to flatten and create a shape for their faces.
- Show them the variety of materials you are setting out, and point out the various features they might want to include. Eyes, nose, mouth, hair, and ears.
- If there is another element to the project, like a self portrait, family portrait, or “emotions”, bring that in at this point.

## Recipes:

**Playdough:** Recipe is detailed on Playdough Spider project page

**Salt Clay:** [www.dltk-kids.com/krc/self-hardening\\_clay.htm](http://www.dltk-kids.com/krc/self-hardening_clay.htm)

# TISSUE PAPER PAINTING

## Process Art



### Objectives

- Engage in exploration with the color transfer process
- Explore color blending
- Hand Eye Coordination and Fine Motor Skills

### Materials

- White paper
- “Bleeding” tissue paper (specially made for bright color transfer)
- Large toddler paintbrushes
- Small containers for both water and the tissue paper squares

### Instructions

- Prep the tissue paper ahead of time by cutting many small squares of whatever colors you are providing. The colors could be for a theme, like red and pink for Valentine’s day, or blue and green for an Ocean theme. Keeping the color choice simple is a good idea, as it can get muddy quick. Two to three colors maximum.
- Pass out the white paper to the students, and set out small containers of water and the differet color tissue paper.
- Allow students to place their squares where they like, adding water on top of the tissue with the paintbrushes.
- The colors will run, creating an interesting effect. As students add different colors, the colors will blend in certain areas.
- After they come to a place of completion, allow the papers to sit for a moment.
- Direct them to peel off the the tissue paper squares and reveal the color blending below.
- These tissue paper paintings make for a great backdrop for other projects, or material for the “Shapes Collage” project. If this activity is a hit, let them do more than one!

### Optional Add-on:

- Create a shape with the white paper ahead of time to suit a specific theme. For example, a heart for Valentine’s or Mother’s day, etc.



# SALT PAINTING

## Process Art



## Objectives

- Explore color mixing
- Experiment with cause and effect
- Strengthen fine motor skills
- Use as an extension activity for color identification

## Materials

- Thick craft paper, cardboard, or paper plates
- Coarse salt
- Gel food coloring (Method 1)
- Food coloring or liquid watercolors (Method 2)
- Glue in squeeze bottles, and mix of half Glue/water
- Paint brushes
- Pipettes/droppers
- Small spoons

## Instructions

Kids seriously love salt painting! It's one of those process art activities that never fails and you can do it so many different ways. Regardless of which method you choose, its a good idea to prepare the space to keep mess to a minimum. Putting down butcher paper or a reusable table cloth for the whole table can work, or you might give every student a tray or piece of wax paper under their work space.

### Method 1:

- Prepare colored salt ahead of time by adding gel food coloring into coarse salt and mixing with a spoon until a bold color is achieved.
- Allow your students to use a paintbrush to coat the paper with the water and glue mixture, and then use spoons to sprinkle the paper with the prepared colored salt.
- At this point you have the option to let the project be finished, or introduce droppers or pipettes so that students can add small amounts of water on top of the salt and watch the colors spread and mix.
- Let it dry and shake off any excess salt into the trash.

### Method 2:

- Allow your students to use the paintbrush to paint the paper with the water and glue mixture, and then use the squeeze bottle glue on top to create raised lines however they like.
- Set out the white salt so students can sprinkle with spoons or fingers all over their paper.
- Introduce droppers or pipettes and little containers of water and food coloring or watered down liquid watercolors, so that students can add the colored liquid on top and watch the colors spread and mix.
- Let it dry and shake off any excess salt into the trash.

# SHAVING CREAM PRINTS

Sensory play, Marbled Paper



## Objectives

- Engage in sensory play
- Explore color mixing
- Hand Eye Coordination

## Materials

- Cardstock or thicker paper
- Shaving FOAM (not gel)
- Shallow baking dish, baking pan, or a plastic storage bin that is large enough
- Optional: pie plate or paper plate
- Liquid watercolor paint (acrylic or food coloring is also fine, but won't be as bold)
- Pipettes or droppers
- Stir stick: a chopstick, bottom of a paint brush, or straw
- A scraper: Squeegee, a piece of thick cardboard, or a large popsicle stick. Anything firm that is as wide as the paper will work

## Instructions

This project is always a big hit. The process is mesmerizing and the results are gorgeous. And shaving cream is very fun to play with! This can be set up as an outdoor summer activity if you are worried about mess, but if indoors, there are many ways to contain it so that they can enjoy getting a little messy! Cover the table with a tablecloth or butcher paper. Have paper towels on hand. You could give each child a paper plate to make their print. Or you might want to create one play and print station per teacher that the teacher manages, so each student gets their turn to come up and create some prints. You could also use a plastic bin to work out of, to contain it all.

- If possible, I always like to start this project by allowing the students to play with the shaving cream. They love to explore with their fingers and hands how it feels and moves. It gets messy of course, but it is also super easy to clean off hands and surfaces.
- Once everyone is clean, add the shaving foam to the baking dish, pie pan, or paper plate, and allow the student to choose 3 colors.
- Allow them to either drop some liquid colors onto the shaving cream with a pipette, or use a paintbrush or stir stick to add dollops of acrylic paint wherever they like.
- The student can now use the stir stick to swirl the color all around. Encourage them to notice the swirls and color mixing, as it's very striking.
- Take a small sheet of cardstock or thicker paper and allow the student to press it down onto the foam, and then peel the paper away.
- Use the scraper to scrape the foam off the paper, and see the cool design!
- Students love the process, so I always allow them to do a few prints. You can even make cards with them, and use the extra paper for collage projects!

# SHAPES COLLAGE

## Recycled Paper and Repetitive Shape Play



### Objectives

- Engage in exploration with collage and composition
- Hand Eye Coordination
- Use as an extension activity for shape themes

### Materials

- Black construction paper, or another complimentary color
- Glue
- Leftover paper from painting or printing

### Instructions

This is a perfect use for the leftover paper that accumulates from process projects!

- Prep paper ahead of time: decide on which shape you want to feature, and use leftover paper from previous process projects to cut out a lot of that particular shape. It's a good idea especially with young students first learning shapes to keep it simple and use only one shape. You can vary the size, length of sides, etc for more visual interest.
- Pass out construction paper to your students. Black allows all the other colors from your shapes to visually pop and look cohesive.
- Set out the glue, and give each student a small pile of the cut out shapes.
- Allow students to use the glue (either in squeeze containers or with a paintbrush) to begin to place their shapes on the paper to create a collage as they see fit.
- The image may be abstract, or older students might try to create more complex images with the shapes. Some will overlap the shapes, and others will keep them separate. There is no wrong way to do this!

