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INTRODUCTION



Christmas is a special time of the year for most people and an excellent opportunity to spend time creating entertaining and festive activities. *Christmas Art and Crafts* is jam-packed with fun and educational projects to captivate children's attention. This book involves children in creating original decorations for the home, classroom or Christmas tree, as well as making meaningful gifts for friends and family.

Encouraging children to be creative and express themselves through art leads to positive, active involvement in their own learning. It is important to expose children to experiences in which they can connect their love of art with purposeful activities that are also fun to create at school and at home.

Christmas Art and Crafts has been created with these ideas in mind, as well as considering the challenge of a restricted budget. The purpose of this book is to provide children with activities that are inexpensive and accessible, and that promote creativity and enhance learning while they make memorable projects.

The book is divided into two sections. The first section is a collection of many different types of traditional Christmas activities with varying levels of difficulty and adult supervision required. The second section gives children an insight into how Christmas is celebrated in different cultures as they create the traditional decorations. Some activities in this section will also require adult supervision. Always read the instructions carefully before letting children begin.

Most of the materials required for the activities in this book are everyday household items that you might otherwise have discarded. Otherwise, they can be easily and inexpensively obtained from your local craft store.



COLLECTING, STORING AND RECYCLING MATERIALS



Store it!

Materials can be stored in any sturdy cardboard containers and boxes with lids, such as shoeboxes, photocopier paper boxes, large ice cream containers and grocery boxes from your supermarket or fruit shop. Your children's first activities can be labelling the various boxes according to what they are going to contain!

Recycle it!

Collating the materials required for the projects in *Christmas Art and Crafts* is a great opportunity for children to learn about the importance of reusing items that are all too often thrown out with the garbage. Once children have the hang of it, brainstorm uses for other recyclable materials.

Children can be encouraged to make their first foray into recycling by saving common household item such as:

- plastic milk bottles and cartons
- last year's Christmas cards
- used wrapping paper
- ribbons and bows
- icy pole sticks
- material and wool scraps
- old doilies
- newspapers and magazines
- leftover paper cups and plates
- tins
- plastic containers (e.g. cream or yoghurt containers)
- styrofoam trays
- toilet paper tubes
- old rubber gloves
- egg cartons
- take away food containers
- old tablecloths
- aluminium pie trays

Of course, make sure anything that contained food products is thoroughly washed and dried before use, and be particularly careful with potential sharp edges on tins. For more safety hints see page 8.



HOMEMADE ART SUPPLIES



Glitter

Mix together 5–6 drops of food colouring with 1/2 cup of cooking salt and stir well. Cook in the microwave for 12 minutes or spread out on a piece of waxed paper to air-dry. Store in an airtight container.

Recycled multicoloured crayons

Peel the paper off any broken or almost-finished crayons and put them in a small pan. Heat them carefully until the crayons have melted and joined, but not so that the colours mix together too much. Pour onto a tray lined with waxed paper and leave to cool and then break or cut the crayon into new multicoloured pieces. Or you can carefully pour the melted mixture into small waxed paper cups, or other shapes lined with waxed paper, and remove paper when cooled.

Magazine confetti

Collect brightly coloured pages from old magazines and have children use a hole punch to create confetti. Be sure to make it clear that children are only to use old magazines that they have permission to punch holes in!

Watercolours

Gather the following ingredients: 1 teaspoon water, 1 tablespoon vinegar, 2 tablespoons baking soda, 1 tablespoon corn flour, 1/2 teaspoon glycerine, food colouring. Mix vinegar and baking soda in a small cup or bowl. Add remaining ingredients and stir.

Colourful pasta

Dilute various food colourings with water in bowls. Soak different kinds of uncooked pasta and set aside to dry. (Adding a little rubbing alcohol helps the pasta dry faster.)

Playdough

In a mixing bowl, knead 1 cup salt, 1 cup flour and 1/2 cup water. If desired, add a few drops of food colouring to the dough. Store the playdough in a resealable airtight plastic container.



SAFETY GUIDELINES



For adults

- Remember to read the directions completely and carefully before starting a project.
- Actively assist in projects that require the use of potentially dangerous tools like scissors, knives, staplers, iron etc.
- Thoroughly clean all containers that previously held food, especially meat. Wash with detergent and leave to dry completely.
- Never use meat trays that contained raw chicken. Eggshells must be washed inside and out to destroy potentially dangerous bacteria.
- Be aware of any allergies that your children might have before you attempt an activity. For example, children who are allergic to peanuts can go into severe anaphylactic shock and even die if they come into contact with anything that even contains traces of peanut.
- Cover work surfaces with old tablecloths, plastic sheeting or newspapers to protect furniture and carpet.
- Keep a very close eye on small children completing activities with tiny items like buttons. Be sure to stress to the children that these items should never be put in their mouths.
- Model 'safety first' behaviour and make sure all dangerous implements are put away in a safe place immediately after use.
- Teach children to clean up and put things away in their proper places after an activity has been completed.
- All children should learn to wear an art smock whenever they have an art session in case they spill something like glue or paint on their clothes. The best way to make an art smock is from a recycled adult-sized shirt worn backwards. Attaching pieces of Velcro to the back to fasten it makes it easier for children to put on. The best way to get a child to always wear their smock is to let them personalise it so they want to wear it. Spend your first art session helping each child use fabric glue to stick scraps of material, sequins and glitter onto the shirts and write their name onto the collar.

For children

Make sure you ask an adult for help before you use any of the following items:

- sharp objects like scissors, knives, pins and needles
- hot items like irons and stoves
- anything electrical