Craft Activities for Children

Simple art ideas for kids of all ages and backgrounds

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1 Introduction

You don't need to be particularly arty or have access to lots of expensive resources to run exciting and fun craft activities with kids. This guide give you some simple and cheap ideas of things you can do using materials you can buy in general stores, like paper plates, pasta and potatoes. A few feathers and a bit of glitter make them a bit more exciting though!

Here are a few things you might want to consider if you are running craft activities for refugee children. You should take in to consideration that they may have limited English and so activities shouldn't be too difficult to understand. Making examples before they arrive is a good way of getting over language barriers, even making a few at different steps if it's particularly difficult!

Children will be from a wide range of backgrounds and so it's great to make activities social ones that would build confidence, help them make friends and might even improve language skills – masks and puppets for example are great activities for this! So remember to leave the last half hour for playing with what they've made.

If you want to make the activities more educational, if it is part of a homework club for example, you can do things like make number finger puppets or add letters in to collage materials.

And, as with any art club, activities should be quick to do and dry so kids can take them home the same day. You also want to make sure that the scissors, glue and paint you use are suitable for use by children. Keep any sharp objects safely out of the way!

2. Pasta Crafts

Pasta is a great arts and crafts staple – it's inexpensive, and comes in great shapes to use to make lots of different things.

You might like to colour the pasta before the session, by dying it using food dye explained here, or use poster paint and leave them on waxed paper to dry, maybe sprinkling a bit of glitter on. Otherwise, either you or the kids can colour the pasta shapes in with felt tip pens, it's quick but can stain fingers. Painting it in the lesson might be quite fun and messy, and the pasta will still stick on to paper with glue when wet.
You can make…

- Greeting cards and pictures,
- Jewellery,
- Headdresses,
- Card photo frames,
- Pencil cups using plastic cups
- People and animals using pipe cleaners

3. Potato Printing

Potato printing is an interesting way of showing that so many everyday objects can be used in art, and once the potatoes have been cut into shapes (by you or with your help), there is no way of them hurting themselves. It's an activity that will interest a large span of ages.

You will need:

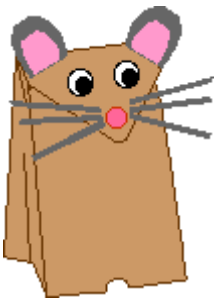
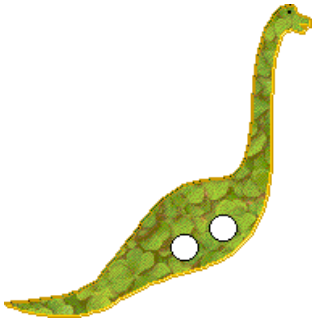
- ★ Baking potatoes
- ★ Poster paints
- ★ Saucers (to hold paint)
- ★ Paper
- ★ Pens or markers, for them to draw a shape on paper for you to carve in to the potato.
- ★ Kitchen knife (for helper use only)
- ★ Glitter, sequins, etc. (optional)

Some good shapes to carve out are star, fish, moon, sun, triangle, smiley face, peace symbol, or letters and words can be good for practicing English!
A step to step detailed guide can be found here, there are some more complicated designs for older children on this website with great illustrations, and ideas for cards can be found here, along with great photos of typically known shapes

4. Puppet making

Animal puppets are easy to make with children from 7 years upwards, they're great for getting children to play together, can encourage them to be vocally expressive and spontaneous, and can help them further their language skills through creative story telling.

- You can make them with paper bags using pens, card and optionally pipe cleaners and stick on eyes, it's quick and not messy.
- Paper chain puppets of snakes or caterpillars look very impressive
- Finger puppets can be made with paper with holes cut in for the fingers to go through as explained here, with peanut shells, or older children can make more complicated ones with felt, either sewn or glued. They can be characters or if you want to use them to teach with the puppet can have numbers or letters on.
- Styrofoam/card and drinking straw puppets are really easy to make with younger children and can be cut in to any shape. You can make extra big ones with paper plates like the tiger one below, explained here.

5. Bubble Blowing

This is a fun and messy way for kids to make unique pictures!
It'll fascinate children of all ages, even teenagers!

You will need:

- ★ Light coloured paper
- ★ Water
- ★ Inks or poster paints (any water based paints designed for children to use)
- ★ Washing-up liquid
- ★ A little dollop of PVA glue is optional
- ★ Straws
- ★ Mugs/bowls/empty yogurt pots, etc.

Cover everything in newspaper, this can be very messy! In each container mix a bit of paint or ink, a squirt of washing up liquid, some water, and optionally a dollop of PVA, but only fill the containers so they're a third full, they will bubble up once the kids blow through the straws! *It's very important to emphasise that they should blow through and not accidently drink through, but making a pinhole in the straws may stop them being able to suck through it.* Once the bubbles are pouring over the edges of the container blot them with the paper, but don't smudge otherwise the marks will be less defined. They'll dry very fast and they can build up layers of colour for an impressive print. Detailed instructions can be found here.

6. Collaging

This is a great activity for creating unusual pictures, characters and worlds, and every child will produce something different! It's also very cheap and helps out with the recycling!

You will need:

- ★ Cut out pictures from magazines,
- ★ A bowl or plate for them to go in to,
- ★ Paper
- ★ Glue (PVA is messier but more sticky than glue sticks)
- ★ Optionally glitter, coloured paper strips, tissue paper and sequins.

You might be wondering what sorts of pictures you could cut out from magazines, but cut out anything you see, hands, mouths, animals, leaves, household objects, even just blocks of colour. This blog has some examples of collages made of coloured tissue paper.

7. Mask Making

Paper plates are cheap and easy to find in shops, and can be used for so many crafts lessons, but they are especially great for making masks with!

You will need:

- ★ Paper plates with a hole on either side,
- ★ Paint,
- ★ Pens,
- ★ Strips of fabric and papers,
- ★ Glue,
- ★ Pieces of string, or even better - elastic thread to keep them on.

A child can turn into a different character with a mask, and they're beneficial for their social development and confidence if used in role-play. If you want to make it easier for them you could cut out some shapes of eyes' and noses etc before the lesson so they get some ideas. You could even cut the plates in to different shapes, like this one. After they're finished tie the elastic thread or string on to the mask through the holes on either side! There are more detailed instructions here, and this website has over 50 designs.

⋆ With thanks to Natasha Vavere for compiling this guide