

Living B.I.G. Through Crafts

We are created in God's image. What a wonderful gift! Therefore, art experiences should celebrate our individuality. Most children have the potential of being creative, provided they are given the opportunity to explore this gift.

Art experiences are all those activities that many children love most and teachers often avoid. They are usually messier than the regular paper and pencil variety of activities. They usually involve more supplies and consequently more cleanup time.

Many teachers leave out art experiences because they feel that their time in Sunday school is so short that to waste it on "crafts" serves no purpose. They proclaim, "Let the school system teach art. We're concerned with the Bible." But as a teacher, you probably already know the value of art as a teaching medium. Keep these points in mind as you introduce art projects into your classroom:

- Relate the activity directly to the lesson. If a craft is only a craft, then the time might be better spent doing something else.
 - Time is an important factor. Most leader's guides give an estimated amount of time each activity will consume. But remember, this is only an average.
 - Encourage creativity. The assembly line project soon will get tossed into the trash can as it is not really the child's "project." Not everyone's project has to look exactly like the picture in the leader's guide. Sometimes it is more fun to choose an alternative way of doing the craft as well. Add your own imagination.
 - Make sure the art project is appropriate for your children's abilities. A project may be appropriate for the average age and grade level you are teaching, but it may not be appropriate for your particular children. In all projects, consider the children you teach.
 - Do not discount a project because you don't have the supplies, the space, or the time. Consider alternatives. Is there another way to do the project? Are there pre-class things you can do to shave time from the project? Are there other supplies you can substitute?
 - Make cleanup an integral part of the project. Children should learn to be responsible for their own "space." This includes maintaining it before, during, and after they are there.
- Children learn to cut by cutting, to draw by drawing. Provide these experiences in a nonthreatening, noncompetitive, relaxed atmosphere in which each child is valued for his or her individual contribution.

Adapted from "Cut, Paste, Paint, Sculpt—Using the Visual Arts" an article by LeeDell Stickler, in O Taste and See That the Lord Is Good. Copyright © Abingdon Press.