

10 tips that use arts and crafts to develop math and literacy skills

Art fosters a child's imagination. It can encourage problem solving and critical thinking. Look for opportunities to help your children develop literacy, thinking and math skills while they enjoy creating their art work.

1. **Offer a wide range of art experiences.** When kids can explore different kinds of materials, they gain a sense of pride that is reflected in their creativity. Art stimulates learning, and plays an important role in developing their communication and thinking skills.
2. **Organize different art materials and then let your kids explore them.** Encourage your kids to tell you what they like or don't like about certain materials. Art helps develop decision-making skills and fosters imagination.
3. **Gear art activities to your child's age and level of development.** It takes time for children to build skills and confidence, so offer them encouragement.
4. **Let your kids make their own choices.** Art is a way for kids to express their feelings. Keep the activity unstructured. For example, if your kids talk about painting a snowman let them decide what it should look like. Encourage them to talk about their choices, without judging their decisions.
5. **Encourage your kids to explore interesting materials.** These could include leaves, pine cones, egg boxes, cereal boxes, straws, wrapping paper, etc. Kids can count them, divide them into equal piles or match them by colour. All of these activities build math and literacy skills.
6. **Talk to your kids about what they are doing, rather than asking them to interpret the art.** Ask about the different colours, textures and shapes of the materials. For example, ask "What does this painting make you think of?", or "I wonder what will happen if we mix the red and blue paint together?"
7. **New activities are great vocabulary builders:** Introduce new words like "drizzle the glue", "dab the paint" or "sprinkle the sparkles". Keep a dictionary close by to point out the words.
8. **Point out art in the everyday environment.** For example, talk about the shapes and textures in the playground. Ask questions like, "How many triangles can you count in the playground?". Talk about the different colours of the leaves. Make a game out of estimating quantity. For example, ask them to guess whether there are more red or yellow leaves in a certain area.
9. **Encourage questions.** Giving kids the confidence to ask questions lets them expand their knowledge and understanding of art. Use their questions to introduce new words into their vocabulary.
10. **Provide an area to display your child's work that so it can be enjoyed by family and friends.** Children enjoy seeing themselves as artists. Be sure to date the artwork, so that you can talk about work done "6 weeks ago" and they learn about time and calendars.