

## **Benefits of Engaging Children in Crafts** By Karen Whiting

- Making crafts develops small and gross motor coordination as well as bilateral coordination. In handling paper, coloring supplies, and scissors, children use their eye-hand coordination as well as dexterity or small motor skills. Larger crafts like painting on an easel use their larger muscles.
- Art allows kids to create their own designs once they master basic skills and that taps into their imagination and encourages creative thinking. This help with cognitive development.
- Children build their confidence and self-esteem naturally as they master skills such as cutting and following direction to create a project. In learning to knit, tie knots, or weave a child learns basic skills and then they apply their ability to create their own designs.
- Making crafts with children allows communication about art, color, and design to increase vocabulary and social skills.
- Doing projects that involve lots of parts such as making paper beads and then stringing them or using cut out shapes to create a mosaic design helps young ones develop spatial relationships and visual perception.
- To open up a packet of cut out parts and put them together to form a design or follow directions helps children increase listening skills, visual discrimination, and sequential memory skills.
- Finishing a project and looking at it helps children learn visual closure and develops persistence. Doing the steps and working through them also helps them develop time management skills.
- Creating their own art once they develop basic skills lets them apply strategic thinking and fosters self-expression as they choose colors and designs they see in their minds. It's good to understand how to hold a paint brush and notice what movements result in different strokes. Art is also about the choices of what to paint, what colors to use, and which strokes to apply where. There's a mix of developing skill and being free to imagine and express oneself.
- Art allows children to express emotions in a concrete way as they draw or shape clay or other materials. They can choose colors that look like fire or darkness to depict inner feelings, and also push and move clay around to release emotions. They can make a face on something to show emotions.

- Art can be enhanced to help children learn about other cultures. This is through sharing crafts from other countries.
- Crafting builds resilience as children learn in making a mistake to try again or find a way to adapt the craft or fix it.
- Making crafts from past times helps children tap into history from a different perspective.
- With STEAM, you can add facts related to the craft or the craft materials to increase learning. It's easier to retain facts that are associated with doing something. For example, when making an art project with stars, discuss shapes or star facts.
- Art provides opportunities to serve others. Children can make a gift and give it to someone. Children can also share craft items and teach a less experienced person a craft they mastered.
- For crafts that need drying time for glue to adhere, they also work on developing patience.
- Add a time to show and tell about crafts and that develops social skills and speaking ability.
- Craft making stimulates neural activity to keep the brain active.
- Use art to teach math concepts too. Symmetry is easy to demonstrate in crafts and see in nature. Check out these ideas at <https://christianchildrensauthors.com/2021/04/29/fun-with-symmetry-by-karen-whiting/>
- Art can help children develop different learning styles. Most children have a dominant learning style, but it's great to develop other ones. Here are some ways crafts helps children tap into various learning styles.
  - You can show them visually the end project and the steps to make something.
  - They listen to directions that develops auditory skills.
  - They use their hands in kinesthetic learning.
  - They share ideas as they work on a group project that fosters global learning.
  - They think through the process and choices to design their own project for analytical learning.
  - If you give them a pattern with directions on it, and discuss words related to crafting, they develop their verbal learning.
  - In showing children how to make a craft step by step, they use logical learning.

Crafts are a fun way to help children develop many skills and character traits.