

MATERIALS TO INSPIRE CHILDREN'S ART

While creating an art center can be as simple as putting out some paper and paint, having the opportunity to explore with a variety of materials can be engaging and productive for young artists.

Over the years, these are some materials I have found to inspire children's art making.

Art-Making Tools

- Scissors and paper cutters
- Stapler
- Tape (clear, masking, packing)
- Glue (bottles, sticks, pens, guns)
- Paintbrushes (various sizes of brush and lengths of handle)
- Hole punches
- Clay cutters
- Spray bottles
- Squeeze bottles
- Palettes
- Plastic cups
- Rulers
- Protractors
- Geometric compasses
- Paint rollers
- Dough rollers
- Tweezers
- Pipettes
- Magnifying glasses
- Baking trays
- Sponges
- Muffin tins

Mark-Making Materials

- Pencils
- Erasers
- Colored pencils
- Sharpeners
- Crayons
- Pastels
- Paints (watercolors, acrylics, finger paint)
- Chalk
- Sidewalk chalk
- Pens
- Markers
- Modeling dough
- Clay
- Dry erase markers

Natural Materials

- Pine cones
- Sticks
- Shells
- Pebbles
- Feathers
- Leaves
- Acorns
- Fresh and dried flowers
- Seeds
- Dried corn and beans
- Pine needles

Consumable and Repurposed Materials

- A variety of sizes, colors, and thicknesses of paper (sketch paper, construction paper, finger-painting paper, grid paper)
- Cardboard
- Ribbon
- Pom-poms
- Rubber bands
- Stickers
- Pipe cleaners
- Bottle caps and lids
- Repurposed jars
- Yogurt cups
- Greeting card fronts
- Wood scraps
- Metal odds and ends (e.g., repurposed keys, nuts and bolts)
- Plastic tubing
- Large-appliance boxes
- Egg cartons
- Repurposed magazines
- Fabric swatches
- Broken costume jewelry
- Odd puzzle pieces
- Beads
- Corks
- Bubble wrap
- Packing peanuts
- Buttons
- Yarn
- Felt
- Sponge
- Straws
- Cotton balls
- Clothespins
- Bubble wrap
- Wooden sticks and dowels
- Wallpaper scraps



FIGURE 3.9
A child explores shapes and patterns while making prints with bubble wrap.

Repurposed Tools

- Kitchen utensils (mashers, presses, rollers) can be wonderful sculpting tools for clay and modeling dough or be used to stamp paint.
- Miniature decorative spoons and forks can be useful for spooning, measuring, and mixing different consumable materials.
- Metal nesting bowls can be used as an inviting way to present materials in the center of an art-making space.
- Muffin tins or ice cube trays are effective tools for helping children sort and display materials for easy use (e.g., sorting pom-poms by color). They can also be used as paint palettes for color mixing: the primary colors can be offered in three sections of the tray, and children can create their own shades in the empty spaces.
- Paper towel dispensers can hold spools of ribbon or paper.
- Lazy Susan spinning organizers can be placed in the middle of a table to provide easy access to a variety of materials.