

T O P

Tips on parenting



IN THIS ISSUE:

1

Preschool Art and
How to View It

4

Getting to Know
Our Moon

6

Math in Books
for Children



TOP is
published & produced by:
The Emma Eccles Jones Center
for Early Childhood Education at

Utah State
UNIVERSITY.

Preschool Art and How to View It

by Dr. Kathy Kalmar

Sometimes, when your young child brings home their artwork, you might be at a loss for words and may ask, what is it? A good response would be, "Look at this! Let's hang it up for everyone to see." Art for preschoolers, in the beginning, is largely an experiment with the materials provided: paper, paint, brushes, glue, scissors, markers, and crayons. When adults approach a canvas and an easel, they usually have an idea of what to paint in mind; however, this is not the case with young children. Young children do not go to the easel with an idea of what to paint. Preschoolers may have never seen, much less used, paint before this encounter. They simply begin seeing what they can do with the materials. "What happens when I put this stuff on the brush. What happens when I drag the brush up, sideways or down, use this jar or that one, or dip the same brush in a new jar?" The children are interested in using the materials and going through the process of exploring these new media (Kostelnik, Sodermann & Whiren, 2004).

Preschool Art

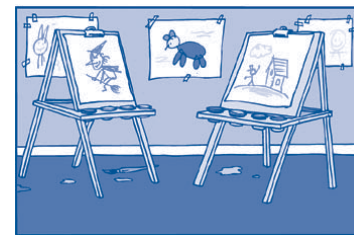
For young children, art is their experimentation with color, line, balance, harmony, and designs. Early childhood teachers explain that young children's art is non-representational. It's not realistic and young children don't intend or expect it to be. To ask these young children to paint a picture is to ask them to do what they are not capable of doing yet and is asking too much of them. Instead, allow your preschooler to use the materials as their needs, creativity, and self expression suggest. Accept value and appreciate their work. The day may come when adult expectations and attitudes will color your child's work. You want to see your child's creative use of the paint, not an adult's. All too soon, you'll notice the typical apple tree, birds, and house emerging in your child's artwork. You will miss the loss of the free form bursts of vibrant, vivid color and their combinations that once characterized your child's work. This shift in your child's work is a result of their developing skill and perhaps a desire to draw or paint things adults recognize. In the beginning, the painting is just that: painting.

"The next time your child paints, you will be able to see the artwork for what it really is and truly appreciate it."

Avoid Asking "What is It?"

As mentioned earlier, it seems logical to ask what the child's artwork is. Since adults know what they want to draw, they think children set out to do the same. However, that simply is not the case most of the time. Generally, preschool art is an experiment so there is no need to ask nor to read into their work attempting to find a recognizable thing within the

continued on page 2 ...



Preschool Art and How to View It

... continued from page 1

artwork. Avoid remarks like “that looks like the sun, a spider, a rainbow, the letter E,” because many times, they aren’t those things at all. Rather, they are the results of the stage of art development that tells us where the child is in their physical development.

What are the Stages of Art Development?

Art growth and development depends on many factors, but one important factor is the child’s own physical development (Cherry, 1972). Frequently, children move in, out, and between these stages. In the beginning, Stage I, the child paints with their whole arm from the shoulder without bending the elbow or wrist. When a preschooler in Stage I paints, they will produce paintings with multiple colors, layer upon layer, that cover the whole paper. Also during Stage I, the child paints vertical or horizontal lines. When you see lines or paint covering the page, you will know your child is in Stage I.

When your child reaches Stage II, the elbow comes into use. The use of the elbow helps young children produce diagonal lines, curves (not rainbows), daubs, and dots of paint. When control of the wrist develops and is used, Stage III begins. Within this stage, circles and face-like creations emerge blending in the skills they gained in Stages I & II. When these occur in your child’s art, you’ll know they are in Stage III.

Stage IV is very exciting. All sorts of interesting things begin to emerge. This stage occurs as the child’s fingers begin to gain more strength; additionally, the eyes and hands become more coordinated giving the child more control over the brush. Lines intersect and connect. Exciting divided rectangles appear and multiple series of enclosed boxes occur. Frequently, your child may add radiating lines from a circle or rectangle. Ladder-like, railroad track designs, things that look like the letters E, F, T, L, and figures resembling the numbers 2 and 4 appear. Resist the very understandable urge to label these remarkable, creative expressions as numbers or letters. Do not ask children to make a T. They may not be able to do it again and may not even realize they actually did so in the first place. They were just exploring intersecting lines and how these things look. After all, this is what occurs in Stage IV.

Stage V occurs when the small muscles of the hand develop further resulting in recognizable and perhaps, even intentionally drawn, shapes. As the child develops and has the time and opportunity to paint again and again, they may begin combining

shapes until the day comes when they really do plan and paint a recognizable picture (often at age 6). Although some five-year-olds may accomplish this, it really depends on their physical growth and development as well as frequent explorations and opportunities to use paint. Stage VI occurs when children intend to draw a recognizable object and name it themselves.

What to Do to Nurture Artistic Expression

The first thing you need to know is that the above descriptions of artwork are the orderly developmental steps and stages in normal growth and development. They are typical artistic expressions of children between the ages two and a half and five years. These are kinds of things children usually do with paint, and they are part of the creative process of painting. It’s the “doing” that children care about so let them “do.” Let them paint freely. Frequently, children do not care to take their artwork home. They’re done with them. They achieved what they wanted. More often, it’s the adults who care about the finished product and want to take the artwork home. Because children are interested in the “doing” of the art, the process, adults need to give them freedom, space, and materials to let them explore the materials. Give your child open-ended things to use such as glue, fabric swatches, toothpicks, craft sticks, crayons, water colors, markers, rice, sunflower seeds, macaroni, cotton, buttons, beads, and ribbon to use and do whatever they need to do. These items are open-ended enough to allow the child to create a design or a snowman with the cotton if they are so inclined. Giving your child these household materials allows your child to gain skill and experience as they express creativity. If you feel food should not be used, find other items. As a parent and grandparent, I want to see my children’s and my grandchildren’s creativity and self-expression, not the craft projects done mainly by adults.

What’s Not Art?

Coloring books, pictures to color in between the lines, and crafts are not the kind of art that develop skills and express the child’s creativity. These items may express the creativity of the adult who drew them, but it doesn’t represent the child’s creativity and self expression. Art that is the result of adult ideas rather than the child’s often have a cookie-cutter “look.” Many times patterns and pre-cut materials are used. Very young children may not be able to trace a pattern yet. Therefore, well meaning adults do the tracing and the cutting for the child. When a child assembles pre-cut pieces

continued on page 3 ...



Preschool Art and How to View It

... continued from page 2

of a craft, the work does not express the child's true creativity. Children's developing art doesn't look alike. You can tell when the child did the artwork themselves. It's done their way. That is precisely what you want: your child's own art, self-expression, design, originality, and creativity.

So, now you know what to look for in your child's artwork. The next time your child paints, you will be able to see the artwork for what it really is and truly appreciate it. Not only do you know what it is and isn't, but you are now equipped to try to see what stage they are entering. With this information of children's growth and art development, you too can relax, have fun, and enjoy the view.

Items for art at home:

- Child-sized safety scissors
- Tissue paper
- Construction paper
- Craft sticks
- Craft feathers
- Cotton
- Toothpicks
- Ribbon
- Ric-rac and sewing trims
- Large buttons
- Large beads
- Toilet paper rolls
- Magazines
- Greeting cards



- Pencils
- Wrapping paper
- Paper lunch bags
- Drawing paper
- Crayons
- Markers
- Water colors
- Glue
- Glue sticks
- Uncooked macaroni
- Uncooked pinto or kidney or lima beans, rice

References

Cherry, C. (1972). *Creative art for the developing young child: A teacher's handbook for childhood education*. CA: Fearon-Pitman Publishers, Inc.

Kostelnik, M., Soderman, A., and Whiren, A. (2004). *Developmentally appropriate curriculum: Best practices in early childhood education*. New Jersey: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.



~Dr. Kathy Kalmar is an associate professor for Saginaw Valley State University and has been working with young children and their families since 1974. She is also the grandmother of two children ages 2 1/2 and 15 weeks. She enjoys using her early childhood background with them and her students.

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GETTING TO KNOW OUR MOON

by Dr. Anne Tapp

The moon can take center stage on winter evenings, using the canvas of fallen snow as a backdrop to light the night. Our planet's closest neighbor is the most obvious and beautiful thing in the night sky as well as the easiest astronomical object to observe. The only scientific instrument needed is a pair of eyes.

Centuries of fascination with Earth's only natural satellite culminated when humans first set foot on the moon in 1969. Interest has again been high since President Bush announced the NASA initiative to revisit the moon. http://www.nasa.gov/missions/solarsystem/explore_main.html

Moon-gazing offers a variety of interesting sights from craters to mountain ranges. Binoculars help to get an up-close view. Use this chart to become acquainted with some of our moon's best known features: www.fullmoonatlas.com. Because there are no shadows at full moon, the dark and light variations

on the surface can easily be seen. The biggest differences can be seen between the dark lunar "seas" (maria) and the light highlands. The maria were made from basaltic lava flows, much like those in Hawaii. The highlands are composed of a bright aluminum-rich rock, Anorthosite.

The moon orbits around the Earth, taking about 29 days to go all the way around our planet. This allows us to see a full moon each month. Some months there are two full moons, and the second is called a blue moon. To find out when you will see the next blue moon, visit the Blue Moon Calculator: <http://www.obliquity.com/cgi-bin/bluemoon.cgi>. What did the moon look like the day you were born or any other significant date in history? Use this site to see the phase of the moon on any date from 1800 – 2199 A.D. <http://tycho.usno.navy.mil/vphase.html>

continued on page 5 ...

activity corner

Sensory Play with Goop and Glurch!

Playing with sensory materials like sand, water, playdough, shaving cream, and cooking ingredients helps children learn about science concepts and develop their fine motor skills. These activities allow the child to understand their environment through taste, touch, and smell. Sensory activities also provide the child with a way to express feelings. Below are two excellent sensory recipes children will enjoy.

Goop

Directions:

- 1 part cornstarch
 - 1 part water
 - Food coloring
- Put mixture on trays, in a dish pan, or in a sensory table. Goop can be re-used by adding water to the dried mixture.

Glurch

Directions:

- 2 parts Elmers glue
 - 1 part liquid starch
 - Food coloring
- Put mixture in a dish pan or in a sensory table. Mix until smooth. If mixture appears sticky add more starch. If mixture separates add more glue. Store the Glurch in a sealed container and put in a cool place.

Children can use their hands to play with Goop and Glurch or you can add a few plastic spoons and some plastic containers for scooping and pouring. Always make sure to supervise the play, but don't make them feel bad if they make a mess—that's part of the fun!



Getting to Know Our Moon

... continued from page 4

Since the moon shines by reflecting sunlight, what it looks like to us on Earth at any particular time depends on the angle at which the sun's light is hitting the moon. For example, if the sun's light is coming from the right, the right half of the moon will be bright and the left will be dark. If the light is coming from behind the moon, its far-side will be illuminated and we will see a dark globe or a new moon. When the Earth comes between the sun and a full moon, a shadow or eclipse is cast. Mark your calendars for this year's eclipses, which will take place on March 3 and August 28, 2007.

Learn more about eclipses by visiting this NASA site. <http://sunearth.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse/lunar.html>

These two bulges travel around the globe, producing two high tides each day.

During the winter months, a white ring of light or halo is often seen around the moon. This fairly common sight occurs when high thin clouds containing millions of tiny ice crystals cover much of the sky. The crystals act like a miniature lens reflecting the light passing through it and forming this strange phenomenon.

Large bodies of water on our planet are affected by the moon. As the moon rotates around the Earth, it pulls the water on the nearest side of the Earth outward into a bulge. A similar bulge on the opposite side of the Earth is caused by the water being thrown outward by the planet's spin. These two bulges travel around the globe, producing two high tides each day. Although it isn't as great as ocean tides, various lakes can have measurable tidal changes. <http://www.newton.dep.anl.gov/askasci/phy00/phy00330.htm>

Take the time to get to know Earth's neighbor in space, our moon. You will be amazed at all you can see and learn.

AREA PLANETARIUMS:

Visit this site to find planetariums in your area. <http://www.go-astronomy.com/planetariums.htm>

SKY MAP:

Find out what your sky will look like tonight: http://amazing-space.stsci.edu/tonights_sky/

MOON LITERATURE:

Moondance by Frank Asch

Grandfather Twilight by Bertha Berger

The Moon Book by Gail Gibbons

The Moon and You by E.C. Krupp

The Animals' Journey to the Moon by Geeta Pati

Midnight On The Moon by Mary Pope Osborne

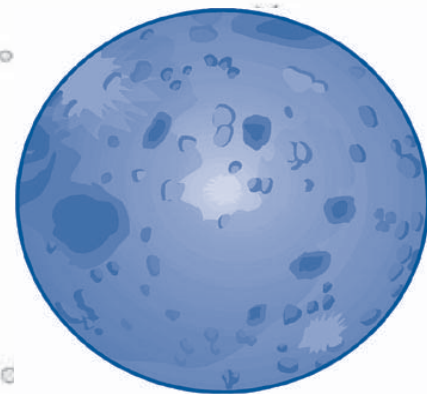
Where Does the Moon Go? by Sidney Rosen

Moon Landing: The Race for the Moon by Carol Stott

Apollo Moonwalks: The Amazing Lunar Missions by Gregory Vogt



~Dr. Anne Tapp is an associate professor at Saginaw Valley State University. She specializes in curriculum, technology, and science education at the early childhood and elementary levels. She is a frequent presenter at national and international conferences and has authored several professional articles.





MATH IN BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

by Sylvia Read

Books have long been a way for children to learn about the world. More and more books are being published that take math concepts as their central focus. Rather than highlight only a handful, provided here is an annotated list of high-quality math concept books.

Counting:

Mouse Count by Ellen Stoll Walsh. In this story, ten smart mice outwit a snake. Children can count how many mice the snake has caught and then uncount them as they escape.

Ten Red Apples by Pat Hutchins. Through colorful illustrations and rhyming text, this book explores subtraction as the apples are taken away by different animals.

My Little Sister Ate One Hare by Bill Grossman. Illustrated by Kevin Hawkes. As the sister in this story eats 1 hare, then 2 snakes, then 3 ants, and then goes on eating, children can count what she eats each time, add up everything she's counted (cumulative adding), and explore the number pattern of increasing by 1.



The Rain Forest Counts! by Lisa McCourt. Illustrated by Cheryl Nathan. Children can learn about the rainforest and practice count-

ing from 1 to 10 and back down to 1.

Count Your Way through Africa by Jim Haskins. Illustrated by Barbara Knutson. Using Swahili words for 1-10, this book teaches about the culture and history of Africa and has pictures with countable objects or people.

Anno's Counting Book by Mitsumasa Anno. With the natural world as its context, this book explores the number concepts of 0 through 12.

Ten Black Dots by Donald Crews. Large black dots are used to teach and explore the number concepts for 1 through 10.

What Comes in 2's, 3's, & 4's? by Suzanne Aker. Illustrated by Bernie Karlin. By using everyday objects, this book teaches the number concepts of 2, 3, and 4.

Just Enough Carrots by Stuart J. Murphy. Illustrated by Frank Remkiewicz. This book teaches the concepts of fewer, same, and more.

A Million Dots by Andrew Clements. Illustrated by Mike Reed.



Concepts of very large numbers such as 200,000 and 1 million are playfully explored in this book through the use of small black dots.



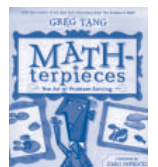
How Much is a Million? by David M. Schwartz. Illustrated by Steven Kellogg. Different ways to

think about the number concept of 1 million are humorously illustrated in this book.

Each Orange Had 8 Slices: A Counting Book by Paul Giganti, Jr. Illustrated by Donald Crews. At one level, the problems in this book allow children to add objects. At another level, children can explore multiplication.

12 Ways to Get to 11 by Eve Merriam. Illustrated by Bernie Karlin. Lively illustrations and large kid-friendly print show different combinations of objects that add up to eleven.

Math-terpieces: The Art of Problem Solving by Greg Tang. Illustrated by Greg Paprocki. This book uses works of art as its inspiration for visually oriented problem solving using addition.



continued on page 7 ...



question corner

"My 5-year-old child is really shy. She will be going to school next fall and I am concerned that she will not make any friends. What can I do to help her become more outgoing?"

— Shirley in Utah

Help your child make a few friends before the school year begins. Set up play dates with one or two other children who will be in the same Kindergarten class as your child. Shy children tend to be less shy around fewer children. A reasonable level of shyness can be considered normal. Typically, you do not need to intervene unless the child's shyness is causing her to have problems making friends, playing, or participating in activities that she really enjoys. It is important not to push a shy child. Shy children need time to observe and often move slowly in social situations. Your role is to offer opportunities and suggestions for participation, but to be gentle, understanding, accepting, nurturing, and patient. Don't try to change your child into an outgoing one, but teach her social skills and ways to enter play with other children that will make her feel more secure. Give her words to say and actions to take when opportunities arise for her to join in the play of other children. Also remember to encourage the child when she does interact with other children. "You are really having fun with Sara. I could hear your laughter." Setting up a few play dates prior to the start of Kindergarten will also help your child practice the social skills she will need once school begins.



~Heidi Malloy, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the Department of Psychology at Metropolitan State University.

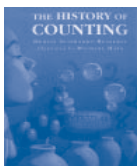
question corner features questions posed by parents to early childhood experts who provide brief responses in this newsletter. If you have any questions you would like answered, please send e-mail to eejcenter@cc.usu.edu or mail to EEJ Center for Early Childhood Education, Utah State University,

Math in Books for Children

... continued from page 6

For older children:

The Warlord's Beads by Virginia Walton Pilegard. Illustrated by Nicolas Debon. This book tells the story of Chuan, who helps his father count treasure by inventing the abacus.



The History of Counting by Denise Schmandt-Besserat. Illustrated by Michael Hays. This book begins by

describing numberless counting systems and the evolution of more complex and precise counting systems made necessary by the growth of business

~Sylvia Read is a former 1st and 2nd grade teacher who now teaches language arts and children's literature classes to preservice and inservice teachers at Utah State University.



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TOP: tips on parenting

is published quarterly by the Emma Eccles Jones Center for Early Childhood Education at Utah State University.

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