

Cut Paper & Printing - Fish Mural

After making fish with paper and glue, the children work together to create an ocean with paste paint. For ages 3 to 6. Plan 3 sessions.

KEY IDEAS

- Cutting with scissors
- Using glue
- Creating designs with paste paint
- Working together to make a group mural

LANGUAGE

mural, paste paint, negative, balanced

YOU WILL NEED

- Colored construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Slightly dampened sponges
- One 18-inch wide sheet of white paper—length will depend on the number and size of the fish
- Paste paint (see recipe below)
- Blue liquid tempera paint
- Bowls or wide-mouthed jars for holding the paste paint
- Several inexpensive 2- to 3-inch wide paint brushes (found in hardware stores)
- Masking tape
- Paper towels
- Space for drying the paste paper
- Iron for flattening paste paper after it dries
- Reusable adhesive putty
- Pictures of fish

For optional booklet:

- Drawing paper
- Black permanent markers
- Watercolor markers

Note: This recipe for paste paint will make enough paint to cover an 18-inch by 6-foot paper. For children who are allergic to wheat, you can use all rice flour. (The addition of wheat flour makes the paste easier to handle.)

*4 tablespoons rice flour
3 tablespoons wheat flour
3 cups water
½ teaspoon glycerin
1 teaspoon liquid dish detergent*

Liquid tempera paint

Blend the flours together. Stir in a little water to dilute the flour and continue to stir while adding the remaining water. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the mixture resembles thin custard and just starts to boil. Remove the paste from the heat and stir in the glycerin and dish detergent to keep the paste smooth and pliable. After the paste cools, put it through a sieve to get rid of any lumps. Gradually add tempera paint to the paste to achieve the desired color. Be sure to test the paste. If it is too thick, add cold water. If the paste runs back over drawn lines, it is too thin and needs to be cooked longer or left open to air-dry until it thickens. The paste will last about three days in a refrigerator.

THE PROJECT

First Session

Preparation

- Set out construction paper, scissors, glue sticks, and dampened sponges.
- Have pictures of fish available to share.

How to Begin

- Explain to the children that they will be working together to make a *mural* which is a large display usually attached to a wall. In this session, they will be using paper and glue to create fish. In the next session, they will be working together to make an ocean for the fish.
- While sharing the pictures of the fish, discuss their shapes and unique parts, pointing out the variety of tails and fins, scales, round eyes, and array of colors.
- Explain to the children that they will be sharing the colored paper on the tables to make their fish. Each child should start by choosing one color of paper. When finished cutting from it, he or she should return the paper to the middle of the table for someone else to use, and then choose another color. Assure the children that there is more of each color if needed. (A bin of leftover scraps of paper is fun to search through for special and unusual colors.)
- Demonstrate the proper way to hold and use scissors. The thumb goes in the small hole and two or three fingers go in the larger hole. With the blade of the scissors opened wide, place the paper deep into the opening, taking advantage of the whole blade while cutting. For a circular shape, use one hand to slowly close the scissors while using the other hand to gradually turn the paper. Continue opening and closing the scissors while turning the paper until a circle is completed.
- Show the children how to attach two pieces of paper with glue by applying glue to the smaller paper and pressing it on to the larger paper. Warn the children that it doesn't take much glue to attach the pieces. Use the dampened sponges to wipe sticky fingers.
- Have the children complete their fish.

Second Session

Preparation

- Prepare the paste paint, test its consistency, and set it out in bowls or wide-mouth jars

with brushes.

- Secure the long sheet of paper to a work surface with tape.
- Set out paper towels.

How to Begin

- Explain to the children that they will be working together to make the ocean for their fish using *paste paint*, a colored paste prepared by adding paint to a boiled mixture of flour and water. By pulling their fingers through the wet paste, they will create *negative* or empty areas where the paste has been displaced.
- In the air, demonstrate with your finger the ripple patterns in water that are created by waves. Have the children do the same with their fingers to “feel” the movements. Explain that after brushing the paste paint on the sheet of paper, each child will take a turn to move his/her finger from one end of the paper to the other, creating the waves in the ocean.
- Load the brushes with paste paint and glide them across the paper in horizontal strokes. Since the paste tends to dry quickly, be sure all areas are covered with a fairly thick coating.
- After spreading the paste paint evenly across the paper, have the children take turns pulling their fingers through the wet paste in a wave pattern across the paper. Have paper towels available to wipe messy fingers.

Note: As the paste-painted paper dries, it will likely ripple and curl. Flatten it by ironing the dried paper on the reverse side.

Third Session

Preparation

- Set out the paper fish.
- Attach the paste-painted paper to the wall using adhesive putty.
- If making the optional booklet, set out drawing paper, black permanent markers, and watercolor markers.

How to Begin

- Tell the children that they will be working together to decide the placement of the fish in the ocean. Afterwards, they will be drawing pictures of their fish for a booklet to be used for identifying the individual artists.
- While each child holds his/her fish on a spot in the ocean, have the children discuss whether the chosen placement creates a pleasing or *balanced* effect. For example, two fish of the same color will stand out better if separated from each other and large fish will appear more unique next to smaller fish. When a location is decided, give the child a small piece of adhesive putty to attach the fish. Repeat this process until all the fish are placed in the ocean.
- To make the booklet when the mural is completed, give the children drawing paper and black markers to draw their fish. Have the children color their drawings with watercolor markers, duplicating their fish as much as possible. Be sure that the children write their names on the bottom of their drawings. Explain that these drawings will be displayed in a booklet near the mural so that observers can identify the artist of each fish.

Note: Make the booklet by punching a hole in the corner of each drawing and holding them together with ribbon, string, or a metal ring. Be sure the booklet is easy to open because it will be very popular with observers.

NOTES

- If necessary, keep the fish a manageable size by cutting the construction paper to be set out in the work areas into 6- by 9-inch pieces.
- When applying the paste paint for the water with a large group of children, it's helpful to have an extra adult in the classroom.
- Wrinkles and folds in newspapers leave marks in the dried paste paper, so it's best to work with the paste paint on an uncovered flat surface. The paste paint usually washes off easily using a household cleanser, but you should test it to be sure.
- Have the taller children do the waves at the top of the paper, since the shorter children will not be able to reach so far.
- Small pieces of the adhesive putty actually work better than larger pieces to attach and hold the fish in the ocean.
- To better integrate the fish with the ocean, have an adult use an exacto knife to cut along the lines of several waves and insert fish behind them.
- If you have the children draw the pictures of their fish before putting them in the ocean, be sure that they understand to not use the markers on the paper fish.
- The children are fascinated with the paste-paint process, so they enjoy watching as they wait for their turn to make a wave.
- The paste-painted paper needs to dry before the real effect can be seen. The ridges that are formed when the paste is displaced will be deeper in color and appear almost three-dimensional.
- Even the youngest children will have success with this project since any shapes that are put into the ocean will become "fish."

LET'S TALK ABOUT OUR WORK

- Discuss the variety of fish that the children made.
- Are the fish carefully glued together?
- Review the process of placing the fish in the mural in a balanced manner.

What the children might say...

- *I'm having trouble cutting the paper.*
- *Everything is sticking to my fingers.*
- *I can't find a marker to match the color of the tail on my fish.*
- *Can I make an eel?*
- *I made my fish swimming in the wrong direction!*

What you might say...

- *Remember to put your thumb in the small hole and your fingers in the larger hole of the scissors.*

- *If your fingers are sticky, you should wipe them on the dampened sponge.*
- *Choosing the color of marker that is the closest to the color of the tail on your fish will work well.*
- *An eel is a great idea to add to our ocean of fish.*
- *Our mural will look more interesting having the fish swimming in different directions, just as in the ocean.*