

Cut Paper - Wavy Weaving

The children discover surprising results in their paper weavings by curving and zigzagging the warp lines. Ages 6 to 13. Plan 1 to 2 sessions.

KEY IDEAS

- Learning the process of weaving
- Creating different effects by varying the warp lines
- Using line and color to make a balanced pattern

LANGUAGE

warp, weft, weaving, pattern

YOU WILL NEED

- 9- by 12-inch colored construction paper—one per child
- Pieces of cardboard approximately 12 x 14 inches to support the construction paper while weaving
- 12-inch strips of construction paper cut into quarter-inch, half-inch, and 1-inch widths in a variety of colors (see note below)
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Masking tape
- Glue sticks
- Tweezers
- Paper cutter for cutting weft strips (optional)

Note: Plan about 12 one-inch strips or 24 half-inch strips to complete each weaving. You will need extra strips if you have the children slide thinner strips over the wider strips as seen in the two weavings above.

THE PROJECT

Preparation

- On the underside of each sheet of construction paper, mark off a half-inch section along the 9-inch edge. This section is to be left uncut while weaving.
- Cut strips of construction paper and set them out, grouped by color and width.
- Set out cardboard, sheets of construction paper, pencils, scissors, glue sticks, and masking tape.

How to Begin

- Explain to the children that they will be using paper to create unusual weavings.
- Demonstrate the process of weaving. Explain that *warp* refers to strips running vertically and *weft* refers to strips running horizontally. Show the children that the weft strips are woven into the warp strips and that each consecutive row is reversed. For example, if the first row goes *over, under, over, under*, then the second row goes *under, over, under, over*. Explain that each weft strip must be pushed tightly against the one above it.

- Tell the children that different effects can be achieved by changing the warp lines. Instead of straight lines, they can use curvy, wiggly, or zigzagged warp lines.
- After the children choose their color of paper, have them use pencils to draw five or six lines starting from below the marked-off section to the bottom of the paper. These lines must not cross one another or come within a half-inch of each other to keep the warp strips from becoming too fragile. The children should cut along the drawn lines, starting from the bottom of their papers and stopping below the marked-off section at the top. The papers are then attached to cardboard by taping along the uncut section. Be sure to put the side with the pencil marks face down.
- Have the children choose two or three colors of paper strips to begin their weavings. Explain that too many colors will make their *patterns*, or designs, busy and have less impact. Encourage the children to balance the colors and widths of the strips by repeating them throughout their weavings. Be sure they understand that the extra lengths of the weft strips will be trimmed after the weavings are completed.
- As the children work on their weavings, remind them to push each weft strip tightly against the one above it. If the warp strips spread apart, they should be pushed in from the sides. To hold the last weft strip in place, apply small dabs of glue under the bottom ends of the warp strips.
- For an interesting effect, the children can slide thinner strips through the weavings directly on top of the wider strips.
- Have the children carefully detach the weavings from the cardboard. On the underside, they should put strips of tape along the four edges of the weavings to hold the weft strips in place.
- The children can use scissors to trim off the extra lengths of weft strips and the uncut section across the top of the weavings. They should then carefully glue down any loose edges.

Note: If a paper cutter is available, it's best have an adult trim the weavings.

NOTES

- This project will take one or two sessions, depending on the children's experience with weaving and how complicated their designs are.
- Unless the younger children have had experience with weaving, it's best to start with 1-inch weft strips.
- Warp strips with rough edges make it harder to push the weft strips against each other, so be sure that the children are using the whole blade instead of the tips of their scissors when cutting.
- Encourage the children to start with only two or three colors of weft strips. Patterns that are too busy tend to lose their impact.
- Sometimes small parts of the warp lines get covered by the weft strips and interfere visually with the design. These small parts can be pulled forward with tweezers.
- For an added challenge, the older children can plan their use of line and color to portray moods or feelings in their weavings.

LET'S TALK ABOUT OUR WORK

- Discuss how changing the warp lines effects the pattern in a weaving.
- Are the colors and the sizes of the weft lines repeated in a balanced way?
- Compare the different results created by the use of line and color.

What the children might say...

- *I've run out of space and I've only drawn four lines.*
- *I'm having trouble cutting on my pencil line.*
- *I need to use five colors of strips because I have a special plan.*
- *When I push my weft strip up, it covers the one above it.*
- *This last strip keeps popping out.*

What you might say...

- *It's a good idea to have at least five lines, but sometimes four will be enough.*
- *You need to draw your lines as guides, but don't worry about cutting on them exactly.*
- *The designs in the weavings are usually stronger when using only a few colors. If you have planned carefully, you may choose the colors you need.*
- *If a strip covers the one above it, you forgot to reverse the over-under pattern. Pull it out and try again.*
- *Be sure all your weaving is pushed tightly together and then use small dabs of glue to keep your last strip in place.*