

Printing - Thumbprints

The children learn a basic printing technique by filling their papers with thumbprints and turning them into fun and imaginative characters. For all ages. Plan 1 session.

KEY IDEAS

- Hands-on introduction to the printing process
- Recognizing defining features that communicate who or what the character is, such as a clown's hat or an elephant's trunk
- Planning use of the whole paper

LANGUAGE

printing, defining features

RESOURCES

Ed Emberley's *Great Thumbprint Drawing Book* is a wonderfully charming resource. Share a few of the characters with the children to help them understand the project, but avoid the step-by-step instructions.

YOU WILL NEED

- Food coloring
- Black fine-point, non-toxic permanent markers (Faber-Castell markers are odorless.)
- Non-absorbent paper with smooth surface (cut into 6-inch squares)
- Paper towels—use the smoother underside of the paper towels
- Plastic plates
- Plastic wrap
- Newspaper pads to work on

THE PROJECT

Preparation

- Make a stamp pad by folding and creasing a paper towel in half three times, keeping the smoother side facing out. Place the folded towel on a plate and put several drops of food coloring in the center. Try making a thumbprint to be sure you have enough coloring to make a sharp print. If necessary, add more drops gradually - too much food coloring will cause the prints to be blurry and smudge. Keep the pad tightly covered with plastic wrap until it is ready to be used. If the pad starts to dry out, simply add a few more drops of coloring and test again. Plan one stamp pad for every two children.
- Have markers ready, but set aside.
- Set out the stamp pads, paper, and newspaper pads.

How to Begin

Printing

- Explain to the children that they will be filling their paper with their thumbprints and then turning them into characters using markers.
- To demonstrate the printing process, place the printing paper on a pad of newspaper. Explain that the softness of the newspaper pad will make clearer, crisper thumbprints. Press your thumb lightly on the stamp pad several times and then press your thumb firmly on the paper. Stress pulling the thumb straight up off the paper to avoid smearing. For each thumbprint, the children must press their thumbs back on their stamp pads to pick up more color.
- Have the children fill their papers with thumbprints, leaving enough space between

each print so that they can draw.

- Warn the children that their thumbs will be a different color, but the food coloring will wash off eventually. If the children wash their thumbs at this point, be sure they dry them very well. A wet thumb will cause the food color to run.

Drawing

- Be sure the children understand that each character drawn should include a thumb print.
- Discuss some ideas that the children might use in their drawings, such as, faces, people, animals, insects, sports, etc. The children should add any defining features which make their characters immediately identifiable.
- It's fun to have a theme or to tell a story through the characters drawn.
- Pass out the markers and let imaginations fly!

NOTES

- Don't let this become a step-by-step project. Once the children understand how to animate the thumb prints, they will need very little guidance to create their own characters.
- Food coloring works better than paint because it dries so quickly.
- It's best to use only one shade of food coloring. Changing colors is very messy.
- If needed, masking tape can be used along the edges of the stamp pad to keep it in place.
- This project works best if all important aspects of the final drawing include a thumbprint, so encourage children to make enough prints to fill their paper before handing out markers.

LET'S TALK ABOUT OUR WORK

- Are the thumbprints arranged in a way that uses the whole paper?
- Are the prints crisply made without a lot of smearing?

What the children might say...

- *Look! My finger is all red.*
- *I forgot to get more coloring from the stamp pad and my print came out very light.*
- *This is fun. How many prints should I make?*
- *That's enough prints. Can I have my marker now?*
- *I'll make more prints later. Can I have my marker now?*
- *Can I make a pinkie print to draw my baby sister?*
- *Oops. I made a mistake...*

What you might say...

- *Even though your thumb looks red, you still need to put your thumb on the stamp pad between each print.*
- *If you try to print over a thumbprint that is too light, it will cause smudges. You can still draw a character over the light print.*
- *You will need a thumbprint for each character that you draw.*
- *Your paper should be filled with thumbprints before you start to draw.*
- *Once you start drawing, the printing materials will no longer be available.*
- *Most of your prints should be done with your thumb, but if you are planning to draw a baby or something very small, it's a great idea to use your pinkie.*
- *If you make a mistake while drawing, let's see if we can turn it into something fun*

instead of scribbling it out with the black marker