

# Smart Art- Using Art to Encourage Thinking

Everybody knows that art should be an integral part of early childhood education. However, a survey of teachers in most schools is sure to find that the majority will say, “It’s too messy,” “We just don’t have time,” or “I’m not an artist.” Banish these excuses with “Smart Art”... ideas that won’t take away from instruction, aren’t too messy, and don’t require an art degree. Of course, The K-Crew will also offer ideas that are messy, will take some time, and might even require some flexible thinking. Discover ways to teach curriculum content using art as a tool.

## Drawing

Drawing is simply noticing the lines with which an object is formed. If students know how to draw basic lines (straight, broken, bumpy, wavy, zigzag, castle top, looping) and perceive which lines to use, they will be able to draw most anything.

**Picture Starters:** Students transform a given line or shape into a picture (e.g. a zigzag line can be transformed into the top of a picket fence).

**“Name Train”:** This is a great activity for teaching students to notice details in people. A student becomes the name train person by process of elimination... “This person is a boy.” “This person is a boy, wearing something blue.” “This person is a boy, wearing something blue, who is 5 years old.” Then the teacher draws a picture of the student as the class describes each feature. Classmates then compile a book with their own pictures of the name train student.

## Puppets

**Sock Puppets:** Add craft materials to socks to create stuffed or hand puppets.

**Puppets on a Stick/Tube:** Use child-drawn pictures and/or craft materials (stickers, fabric, trim, wiggle eyes, pipe cleaners, yarn, etc.) to create puppet personas. Attach the personas to craft sticks or cardboard toilet paper tubes

**Die-cut Puppets:** Glue, sew, or tape 2 large paper die-cuts along the edges to create a hand puppet.

**Puppet Tube Theater:** Push straws up through the bottom of a small Pringles can or disposable cup. Attach mini-puppets to the tops of these straws. Retell the tale by pushing puppets up for speaking parts/appearances and pulling puppets down into the cup when not in a scene (or backstage).

**Salt Dough Puppets:** Use salt dough to mold puppet bodies. Dress the puppets using old doll clothes, fabric scraps, and craft materials.

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## Masks and Costumes

Stock up on lots of fabric scraps, yarn, and craft materials for students to create their own costumes. Brown paper grocery sacks and newspapers can be transformed into vests, hats, skirts, pants, shawls, wigs, and more! Masks can be made using paper plates, old sunglasses, and even transparency film attached to sentence strip headbands.

## Papier-mâché

Use papier-mâché to create dimensional art.

## Sculpture

Sculptures may be created using dough, papier-mâché, craft materials, Styrofoam pieces, toothpicks, marshmallows, foil, sand, pipe cleaners, and even old junk.

## Painting

**Finger Painting:** Students use their fingers to “brush” and slide this medium over finger paint paper, freezer paper, or even the tabletop. Tabletop paintings make great prints. Simply press a clean page on top of the table. Lift to reveal the impression.

**Watercolor Painting:** Students use liquid watercolors (or dry palettes, if you must) to create vivid paintings on a variety of surfaces.

**Foam Painting:** Use a combination of shaving cream and foam paint to create masterpieces ranging from marbled paper to batik.

**Fluff Painting:** Use this puffy textured paint whenever a dimensional effect is desired.

**Tempera Painting:** Don’t forget this old standby. Nothing beats tempera’s opaque coloring. Remember to add a little dish soap to the paint as an extender.

**Wax Resist:** Any porous object (paper, fabric, hard-boiled eggs, etc.) can be transformed using wax resist. Use crayons (Crayola Construction Paper crayons are fabulous for this, but even old unscented candle tapers will work) to write secret messages, draw pictures, or create designs. Next use a wash of watercolors to reveal the wax markings. We recommend Colorations Liquid Watercolors from Discount School Supply. These are so much more vivid than the dry palette kits you buy at the grocery store.

## Stamps

Supply a variety of stamping tools (stamps, thumbprints, Q-tips, bingo dotters, precut sponge shapes, ink pads, paint, etc.). Students use stamping techniques in response to writing, science, and math lessons.

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## **Torn Paper**

Use those fingers to tear instead of cut shapes and designs.

## **Photography**

Step out of the box and allow your students to use a camera. Their photographs can be used as a springboard for investigating and writing.

## **Art Recipes:**

**Fluff Paint:** Add equal parts school glue to shaving cream. Mix it until it appears to be a fluffy, smooth texture (like stiffly beaten egg whites). Food coloring or liquid watercolors may be added to dye the “fluff.”

**Foam Paint:** To make your own foam paint, mix shaving cream and liquid watercolors or food coloring.

**Liquid Starch Finger Paint:** Mix ¼ cup liquid laundry starch with 1 teaspoon tempera paint until blended thoroughly. Store in an airtight container.

**Papier-mâché Paste:** Mix art paste with cold water. Store in a tightly covered container. If you cannot find art paste, school glue mixed with water and a little flour will work the same. (The clean up is just so much easier with the art paste.)

**Salt Dough:** Mix 2 parts flour with 1 part salt. Add enough water to form a dough consistency. May be baked (300° for an hour) or air dried.

**Sand Castle Dough:** Combine 4 cups of sand, 2 cups of water, and 2 cups of cornstarch in an **old** pan. Heat on low, stirring constantly until the mixture thickens. Set aside and cool. Mold into art and allow to air dry.

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## Art Supplies:

Start stocking up on these supplies. You'll find it easier to fit in "smart art" when you have everything handy.

tempera paint	fabric scraps	balloons	paper plates
liquid watercolors	old socks	lunch sacks	sentence strips
construction paper	liquid starch	grocery sacks	headbands
manila paper	cornstarch	shaving cream	crayons
newspapers	dish soap	food coloring	Q-tips
cardstock	cans & boxes	craft sticks	sponges
old file folders	glue	toilet paper tubes	bingo dotters
wiggle eyes	art paste	straws	adult T-shirts
yarn	flour	pipe cleaners	
string	salt	adding machine tape	

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