



A
Painting
Curriculum



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Introduction

Welcome to *The Painting Curriculum*. Why a painting curriculum, you may ask; Why not just let the children paint?

That's great for really young children that are getting used to using paint and have no inhibitions. As children get older however, they often get stuck with that classic "what should I paint" mantra and don't know how to move forward with their painting.

Teachers and parents also would often like to add some skills and concepts to painting activities and this guide addresses both needs; what they should paint and how they can learn while painting.

I created the first edition of this eBook many years ago when I was in education. I have a Masters degree in early childhood education and spent time as a teacher and a director. The original manuscript of this guide was based on my early childhood experience was catering mostly to children before elementary school age.

In the past years, my art life has broadened. I became an elementary school art teacher and also started teaching mixed media art to adults. (You can check that out at my blog www.creativityreignited.com)

As a result, I now have a lot more to say about doing art with kids of many ages and I decided to expand this guide to include all that I have learned as an art teacher.

As an art educator I try to incorporate the elements of art into many of the art activities and to make the art elements the structure for this painting guide. There are also a few principles of design included.

Of course, you don't have to do the activities in order but, you can pick and choose activities as you please.

These activities are can be done with children of many ages. You will probably have to figure out on your own though, which activities are too difficult for certain children.

The goal is having children paint is to allow them to use their creativity to paint freely without inhibition. Sometimes though, we need to structure things a bit to give the confidence they need to create freely, Hopefully this guide will aid towards that goal.

I hope you enjoy getting your children/students more involved in painting creatively!

Faigie Kobre

Beginning Painting Activities

Painting is one of the most fun art activities for young children.

When they are very young and experiencing their first painting activities, they need to just be allowed to paint. Period.

They will be learning that paint makes marks and that if you put the red brush in the blue paint it will muddy the colors. They are learning the mechanics of painting, they don't need to worry about "*making something*" at these early stages.

Process only painting, which is what new painters should be doing, is when the process is what counts as opposed to the product. Children that are new to painting only care about the experience of painting.

Easel painting is often the first introduction of many children to process only painting in their nursery and kindergarten classrooms.

Easel Painting



In most typical situations there is an easel, a cup for each color, along with a brush and a large paper to paint on.

It is a very basic setup and the children do not have to worry about washing out brushes as they only use one brush with each color. They do have to concentrate on putting back each brush into the right color cup.

It's a much more sensory experience when children can see the delicious colors they will paint with, so transparent cups are nice if you have them (if not, don't sweat it). Paint jars/cups should be covered when not in use so the paint does not dry out.

Large newsprint is perfect for easel painting as it is large, inexpensive and the children can really move their arms around the whole paper with the brushes and paint.

There are many other process only painting activities besides an easel but, an easel seems to be the most common. It is important to realize that for the most part they will not be making real pictures but will be mashing and generally making a mess on the paper.

What to Expect From Different Ages

One of the biggest challenges of parents and some educators is expecting too much from our children too soon.

We would already like our 2 and 3 year olds to be creating like a 5 or 6 year old and sometimes for our 5-6 year olds like 10 year olds.

Very young children are capable of very little in terms of representational work. They are learning about the materials, how to use them, how the brush makes marks and they do the same things with them over and over again.

The concept of allowing young children to keep doing the same things over and over again before proceeding to the next stage is often a challenge for some of us. One needs lots of patience until we see any form of actual representation in a child's art.

It is not until around 4 or sometimes 5 year of age that children want to naturally create artwork that looks like something representational. That however, will only happen if they have enough time to work with the materials without feeling forced to create "something."

It is us adults who need to know "what did you make?" while to the child it doesn't really matter too much at that age.

Children's drawing generally follows a certain progression that is a constant in societies across around the world. Just as almost all children crawl before they walk, so too, they scribble before they draw. Their drawings and their paintings will differ, depending on their environment and the instruments of art available to them.

All children experiencing normal development progress through the same basic stages; it is only the pace of progression that varies from child to child. Of course, the boundary between one stage and the next is not sharply defined, and so, the transitions between stages will usually be fluid rather than abrupt.

Below is a poem that I have for years ago about children and painting that makes this point quite well.

The Painting

by Helen Buckley

Once a little boy was going to paint a picture
He put the paper on the easel
And he looked at all the jars of colors in front of him.
"What are you going to paint?" asked the teacher.
"The sky," said the little boy.
"I am going to paint the sky."
"Good," said the teacher,
"Do you have enough blue paint?"
"Yes," said the little boy.
And he took up the blue brush
and made a wide band across the top of the paper.
"There," he said. "There is the blue sky".
And he looked around for the teacher,
But she had gone.
Then the little boy looked out of the window
To see if his sky looked like the real one.
And it did.
But was the sky ALWAYS blue?
The little boy put down the blue brush
and thought about the sky.
"Sometimes," he thought, "Just before night,
the sky is pink - and a little purple."
So he took up his pink brush
and then the purple,
and pretty soon there was a sunset on his paper.
Then the little boy remembered winter,
and how the sky looks when the snow comes down.
So he took up his white brush
and made soft snowflakes all over
the blue and the pink and the purple sky.
And some of the snowflakes melted
to make more colors and the little boy felt happy
like he always did when the snow came down
in the wintertime.

And just as he was about to put down his brush
be finished, he remembered a day in the summer
when the sky grew dark
And he remembered that he had been a little scared,
and he had to run and tell his mother about it.
So now he took up the black brush
and painted great storm clouds
with flashes of red and orange lightning
streaking through them.
"It's thundering, too," said the little boy softly to himself,
"Boom! Boom! Boom! And the wind is blowing!
And he made the rain come down -- hard rain --
In long green lines across the sky
and all the colors ran together in rainbows
at the bottom of his page
"Now I will make the sun shine,"
said the little boy to himself,
and he made a big, round sun in the middle of the paper.
But the painting was so wet
and there were so many colors in it
that the yellow sun turned brown in the sky
But the little boy didn't care --
His picture was finished
and it was just the way he wanted it.
He looked around for the teacher,
and pretty soon she was there
Standing by the easel and looking at all the colors
All the blue and the pink and the purple
All the white and the black
All the red and the orange and green
And the yellow that had turned brown.
The teacher looked at all the wet and dripping colors
which had run together
in the snow and the wind and the rain
of the little boy's painting.
And she said "My goodness!"
"I thought you were going to make the sky!"
"I did," said the little boy,
"I made all the skies I know about."
And he took his picture off the easel
and put it carefully away to dry.

Process only painting

Easel painting may be a child's first painting experience in school. However, you may not have easels available or you may be painting at home. Here are some of the many ways the children can paint without an easel concentrating on the process only.

The list below have some types of painting, the backgrounds you can use to paint on, and tools other than brushes that are fun to use as well.

Types of process-only painting	Backgrounds to use	Tools for painting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Easel painting •Finger painting •Sponge painting •String painting •Feather painting •Dot painting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Sulfite paper •Construction paper •Card stock •Cardboard •Wood •Paper bags •Newspaper •Paper plates •Paper towels •Shelving paper •Kraft paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Thick and thin brushes •Paint spreaders •Old credit cards •Droppers •Q tips •Straws •Rags •Paint rollers •Fingers



Painted Papers

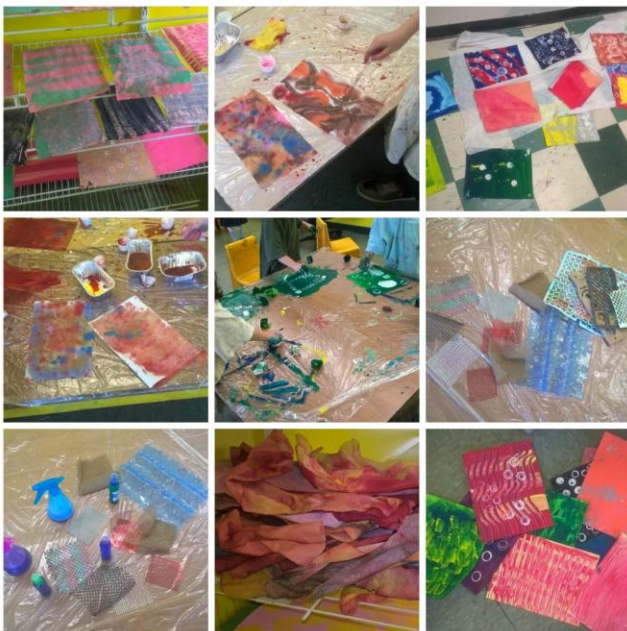
Many of the process-only activities that the children do end up looking either like messes or just painted papers. Which is perfect as there are many artists and art teachers that actually do painted paper activities and then use these papers for other projects.

If you want to do painted papers then you need to limit the colors you give the children. You would give them one color to paint the background and then another color to make designs on the paper. You can use sponges, forks, texture rollers and other homemade objects to add the second color to the papers. At times you can add a third color as well.

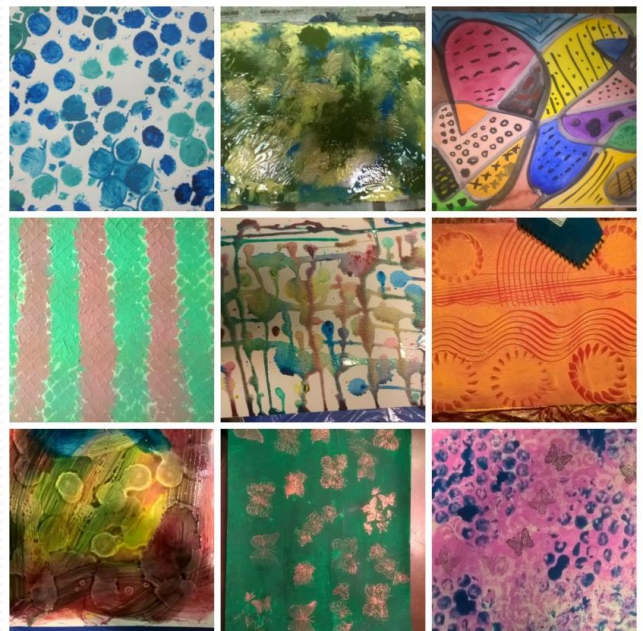
In my job as an art teacher, I learned about this from a blog called [Deep Space Sparkle](#) and you will find more exact directions on making painted papers along with ideas of what to do with these painted papers.

I also have a post on my blog on adult creativity www.creativityreignited.com on [making backgrounds](#). Many of the ideas are for making painted papers and can be used for children too.

Painting papers in my classroom



Painted backgrounds from my blog creativityreignited.com



About paint

I am in no way an expert on paints. For years I used the standard, cheapest tempera paints.

Then I became an art teacher and started learning from blogs like www.deepspacesparkle.com, www.cassiestephens.com, www.theartofed.com etc.

I started learning about all of the various paint options and how the cheaper paints did not come close to the more expensive ones in their color saturation and opacity.

As a result, I switched to *Sax versa temp* for liquid tempera a couple of years ago and I love the vibrancy of their colors (you can buy them in pint size or gallons).

I only added tempera cakes to my curriculum this year since I started teaching a choice based classroom (check out my blog for more info on this) this year and needed more options for the children to choose from when painting.

I bought the Alphacolor biggies and the Richesons and they are good even though the children like the liquid tempera better.

For pan watercolors I originally was buying the more expensive Prang sets as their colors are richer. However, I found later on that the cheaper Crayolas work just fine and went back to using them. This year I bought the 16 paint set as opposed to the 8. (Good because they have 2 blues and the children use up blue very quickly)

The liquid watercolors that I use are from Blick and I water them down greatly. You don't need them so concentrated.

For acrylics I've been using the cheap craft ones that I get at Walmart for 50 cents but that's because I don't use them that much. I know there are higher grade acrylics with more opacity and in larger bottles but for my needs so far I have not needed more.

On the next page is a chart that lays out the types of paints and some more info about them.

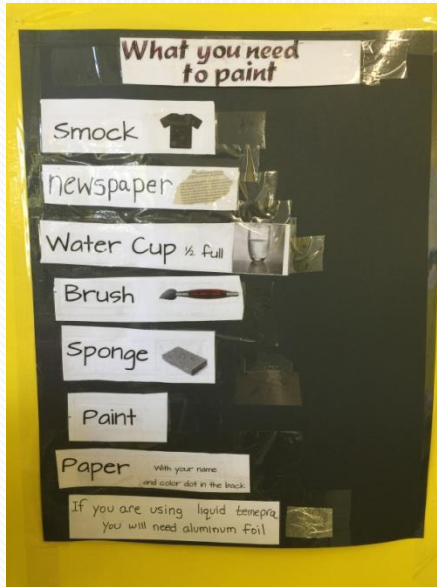
Types of Paint

There are many types and brands of paint. I can only share with you my experiences with what I've used

Type of Paint	Opaque or transparent	Notes about paint	Kinds I like
Tempera cakes	Opaque	Needs to be woken up with water	Alphacolor biggies or Richesons
Liquid Tempera	Opaque	The most common and the one I use for teaching color mixing	Versa temp from Sax
Acrylic	The more expensive brands are more opaque than the cheaper ones	Permanent. There are so many colors that I don't use these for mixing	I generally use the small craft paints from Walmart. I don't have them mix these as there are a wide number of colors and shades
Pan watercolors	Transparent	Need to be woken up with water	Prang is rich but Crayola is good too, and cheaper
Liquid watercolors	Transparent	Need to be diluted as they are extremely intense	Blick, Sargent-most any will do the job



This is my painting setup in my TAB/choice based classroom. The children learn to be independent by reading what they need and getting the materials from the labeled storage containers.



I basically use 3 types of brushes. The red are the Royal Langnickle and the clear are watercolor brushes also Royal Langnickle. Then I have some very small detail brushes as well.



Tempera



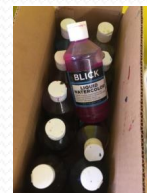
Tempera cakes



Pan watercolors



Liquid watercolors



Acrylics (that I'm currently using)



The 7 Elements of Art

This guide is structured around the 7 elements of art.

The 7 elements listed below are the variety of aspects used when creating art.

For each element that I discuss I show you images of artwork that are concentrating on that particular element. (Even if there are others there as well)

The elements do not have to be taught in order even though lines, shape and color are the simplest and the most applicable for young children as there are many more activities to do with those elements.

When you see a green box like this that is where you will find the particular activities for each element

LINE

COLOR

SHAPE

SPACE

TEXTURE

VALUE

FORM

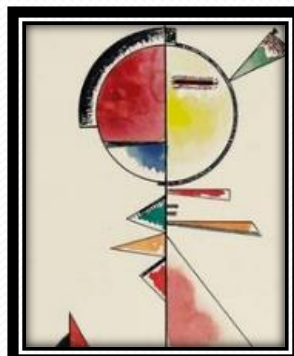
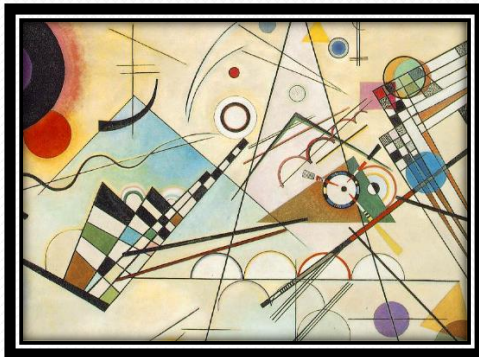
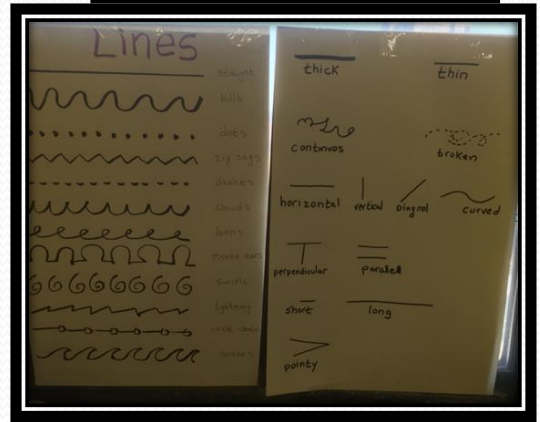
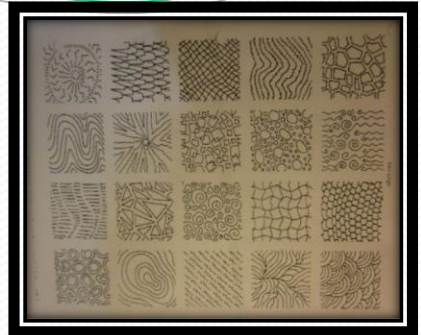
LINE

Drawings and paintings are made up of that most basic of elements...Line.

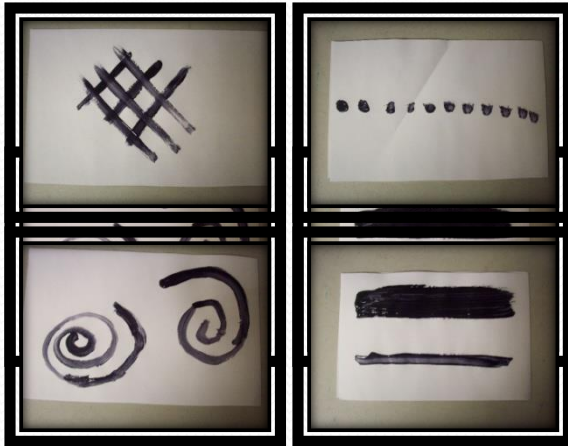
There are so many different kinds of lines.

Making charts available that show the variety of lines helps the children visualize the types of lines there are to help them paint.

The artwork below has a number of different ways that artists use line. Even though all artwork uses line, it is emphasized here.



Using the line charts as reference, have the children recreate as many lines as they can. It's best to start with one color like black so they can concentrate on the lines not the colors.



After they have experimented with lines in one color allow them to use as many colors as they want. Have them fill the whole page with various lines.



Gather a number of different items that you can give to experiment making lines with. For example: feathers/pens/straws/forks etc.

Divide a paper into 4,6 or 8 sections. Discuss weather types and what lines show these weather patterns. Then, have the children use lines to create the various kinds of weather patterns.

This can lead to larger paintings depicting real weather scenes. Ask them to remember some type of extreme weather that they witnessed or were caught in and to paint that scene using the lines they painted of that type of weather scene.



It's a good idea to bring in pictures with heavy rain, tornadoes, snow etc and have them try to paint those with the black lines. If they can't come up with 8 types of weather situations then let them do as many as they can.

Using oil pastels, have the children divide a page into many sections. Tell them to create different lines in each section. They can use the charts to help them.

When done, they should use watercolors to paint over the whole paper. The oil pastels will act as a resist and the lines will shine through.



Take a line for a walk- Have the children dip a paintbrush into paint and just drag it across and around the page filling up the page.

On a similar note, put on some music and have the children make lines according to how the music seems to guide them.

SHAPE

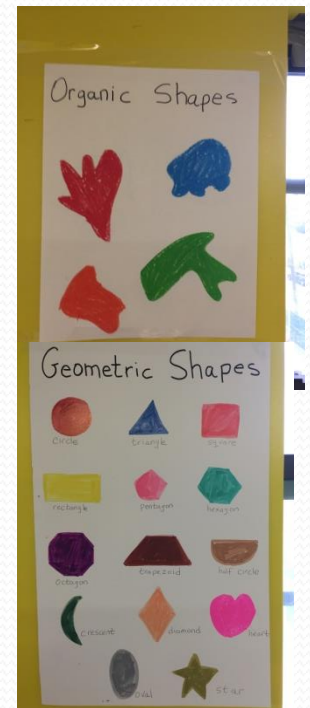
There are two types of shapes: geometric and organic.

Organic are amorphous shapes without a name while geometric shapes are set and one can name them.

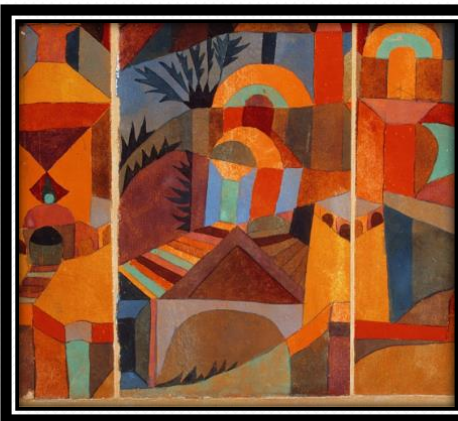
There are two ways to paint shapes- either as outlines or as blobs.

Blobs are when you fill the shape in as opposed to just outlining a shape.

The paintings below use shape as their subject matter.



These are some charts I use to give the children ideas about different shapes they can use. It also teaches them the shapes.



Have the children create some shape outlines and then create some blob shapes. Have them do a few shapes using both the outline and the blob methods. They can try geometric shapes and organic shapes. They can also try outlining a shape and then filling it in.



Below is a list of activities that you can give with painting shapes.

- Make a bunch of outlines in one color and fill them in with a different color.
- Fill a page by painting shapes next to each other leaving one empty white space on the paper.
- Make two blobs and 3 outline shapes.
- Make a blob shape inside an outline.
- Do lots of blobs connected to each other
- Paint larger shapes and then when it's a bit dry, paint a smaller one of the same type on top of it or paint a different shape on top of it.
- Fill a page with organic shapes.
- Fill a page with geometric shapes.



Based on this list you can see how you can easily you can add your own ideas.

Template fun

Look for items around your house or classroom that you can use as templates (there are store bought ones that you can use as well).

Have the children trace around the shapes filling up the page. They should overlap each other. After all the shapes are drawn, they can paint in all the different shapes the overlapping has created.



The template projects here were colored in with either markers or oil pastels but, you can easily fill them in with paint.

Negative space (the empty space around the image you paint)

paint
Paint

Negative space painting is a bit of a difficult concept but, you can do some easy activities to teach it. Take a string or some coins and put them on the page. Have the children paint AROUND the objects. Remove the object when finished painting. Show the children which are the positive and which are the negative spaces .



Negative space: The red and the blue space around the objects

For a more concrete example, print out pictures of trees (like the image below) or other objects that seem to have a defined negative and positive shape and have the children paint only the negative space-**on top of the paper**. (or use a piece of acetate on top)

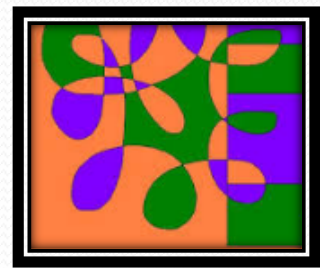
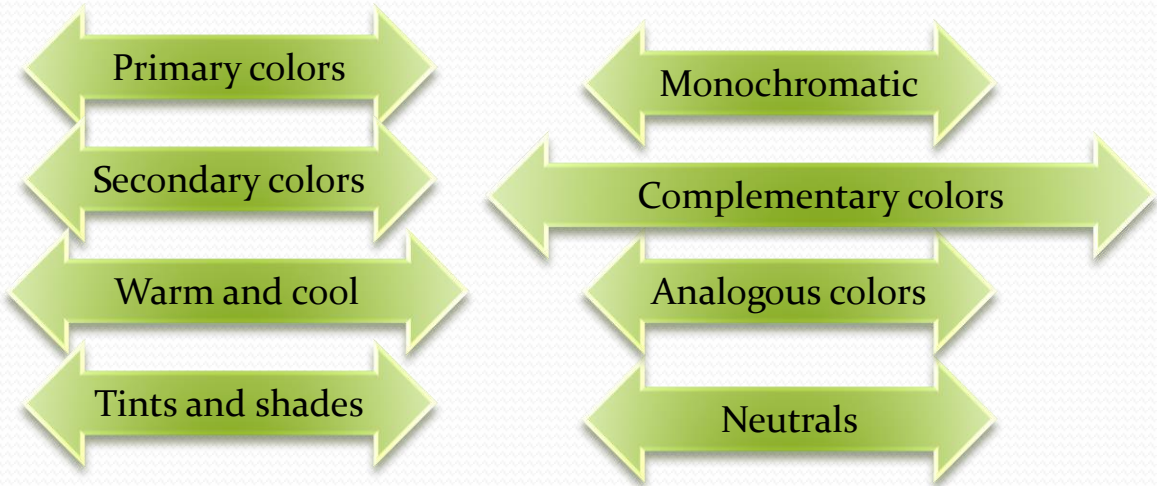
Once they do that successfully, they can try it on a separate piece of paper by only painting the space they painted when painting directly on top of the picture.



COLOR



Color is probably the element that has the most activities you can do with children. Aside from the activities themselves, I have task sheets with the color concepts that you can print out and have the children do on top of the sheet.



Primary colors



Red, yellow and blue cannot be made or mixed as they are primary . The reds and the blues of different brands are all different and will make different shades of color when mixed. I buy magenta and turquoise to use sometimes instead of blue and red to show the different shades..

Using a piece of cardboard or foam core, have the children dip the edges into black paint. Stamp lines all over the page. When dry, paint in with primary colors

Another way to use primary colors is to just paint stripes or sections of primary colors filling the whole page.



Below are three different paint holders I've used. I use cut up egg cartons the most because you can throw them out once they're done.



Secondary colors



When primary colors are mixed with each other you get the secondary colors. The children will learn how to mix colors and can then make a color wheel.

There are two ways to mix paint for painting.

The first way of is having the children mix together different colors in sections of egg cartons and use those various colors for painting with.

The second method is what I learned in graduate school, which was called “tray painting” back then. The reason for that was because the mixing took place on an aluminum tray and the children mixed colors as needed.

I modified this type of paint by using *disposable* aluminum foil to mix the paint and recently have also begun using Styrofoam plates (foil is cheaper).

Supplies needed for “tray painting:”

1. Paintbrush
2. Cup of water
3. Egg cartons (or baby food jar lids etc.)
4. Sponge- for wiping brush after washing it in water
5. Aluminum foil (or Styrofoam plate)
6. Paper for painting



Learning to mix paint is an excellent activity for following directions aside from the benefits of using the different colors that the colors can make.

The children often spend their time in the beginning just mixing the colors without using them for their paintings leaving their mixed colors all over their foil pieces. Sometimes when they are done painting I tell them to take a white paper and rub it on top of all their colors pulling a print. They get to see how the colors then look on white paper if they haven't used it that way.

The first step in learning to mix colors is to learn how to wash their brush before putting it into a new color. Start by having them paint with one color and washing off the paintbrush before using another color. They need to wash the brush well, wipe it on the sponge and then use the brush in a new color. This teaches them the basic steps of cleaning the brush between colors.

When they are ready to mix, they need to follow the same steps. Before they put their brush into a new color they need to wash it out.

If they want to mix red and yellow then they need to take some yellow on the brush (**you teach them that you always start with the lighter color**) and put it on the mixing palette. They then need to wash and dry their brush. They then take their brush and take a small amount of red (because they can always add more) and add it to the yellow and mix it together. They can then use the orange color it makes to paint with.



Once they how to make secondary colors they can create shapes all over the page and paint them in with secondary colors.



Making color wheels

Now that they know how to mix colors, they can make a color wheel to use as a reference. I have a large one hung up in my classroom but, there is nothing that makes them remember it better than making one themselves.

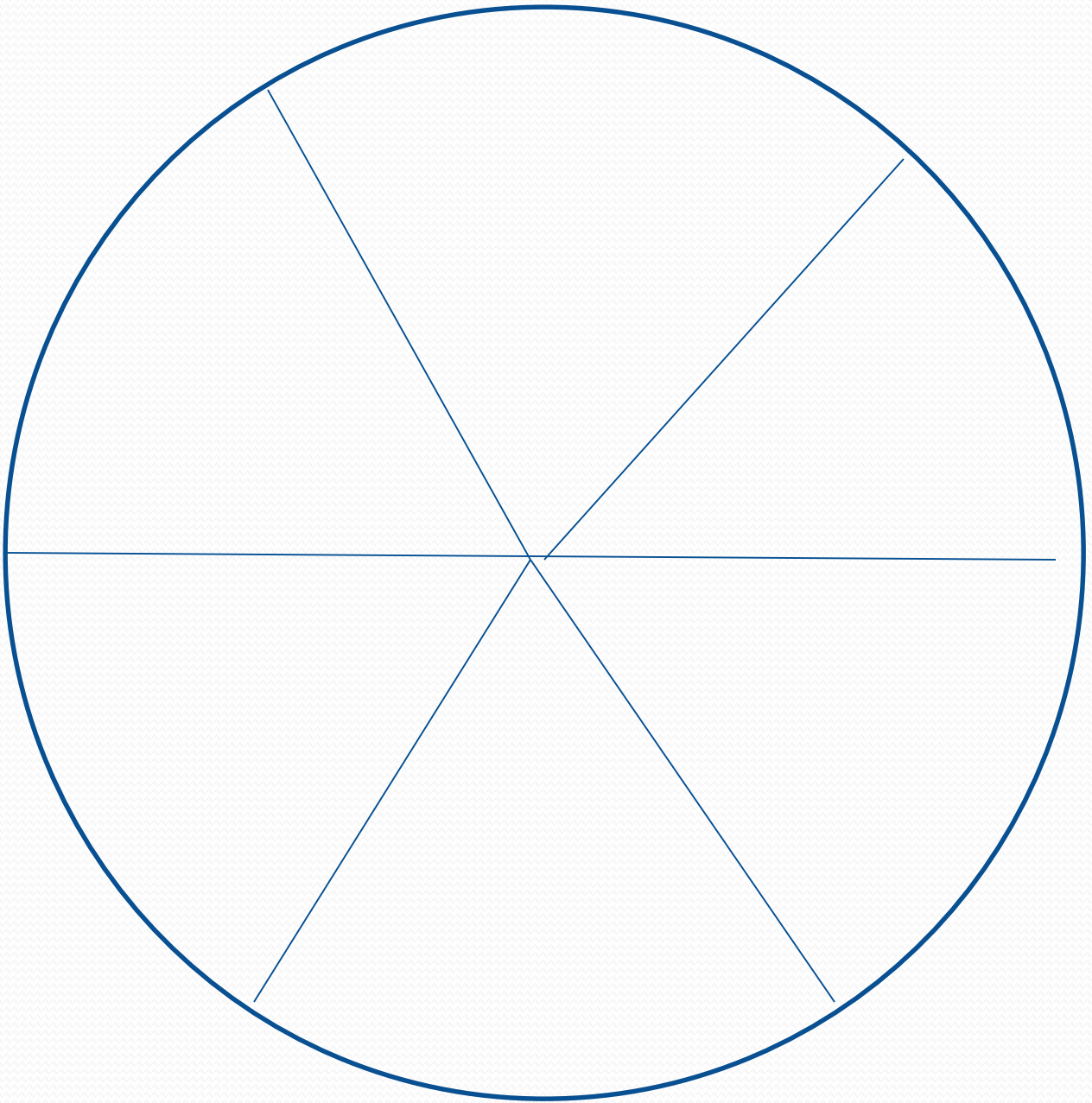


To make a color wheel you can either give them a circle with smaller circles in it or a circle divided in 6 sections.

Step 1 is to paint one of the primary colors in an empty space. Step 2 is to skip a space and paint in a second primary color. Step 3 is to skip another space and paint in the third primary color.

Then, using the color mixing skills they have learned, they need to look at each empty space and mix the 2 colors on either side of that space to get the color that will go in that space. They can then add in the primary colors and the secondary colors in the boxes on the bottom.

On the next page is a color wheel that you can print out on card stock to use for painting or you can copy it and make your own.



Primary colors

--	--	--

Secondary colors

--	--	--

Shades and tints

Monochromatic

A shade is when you add black to a color.

A tint is when you add white to a color.

Monochromatic means a color scheme using one color with all of its tints and shades.

Give children a large piece of paper and have them create a grid by drawing boxes.
Make as many rows as colors you have.

They start with one color in the first box on the first line. They then add a bit of white or a bit of black to each color and add it to the line of that color. They will get a range of tints and shades.

They can then choose one color and create a bunch of circles on one page in a variety of tints and shades of that color. A monochromatic color scheme.



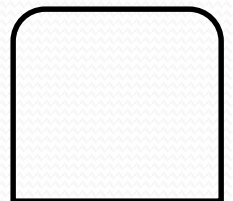
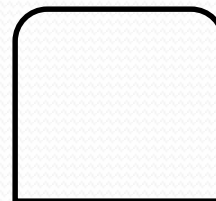
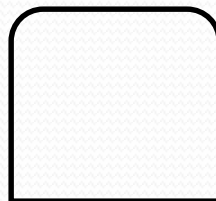
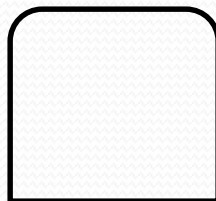
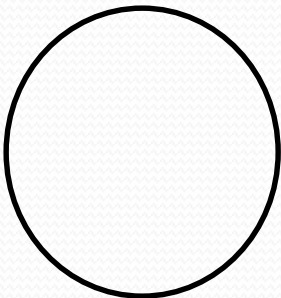
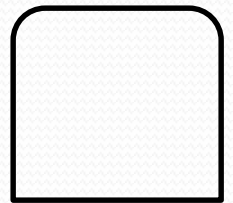
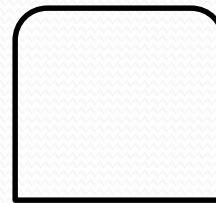
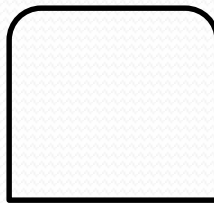
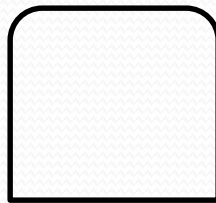
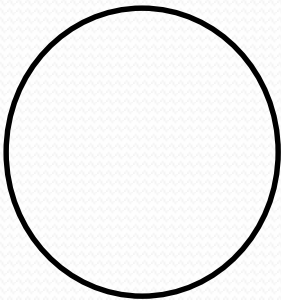
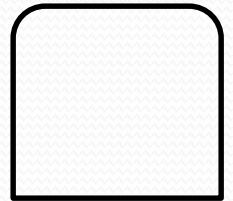
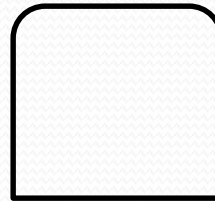
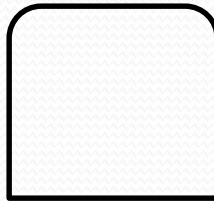
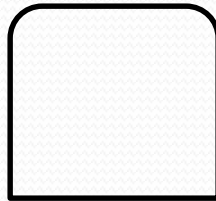
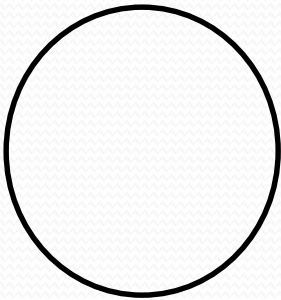
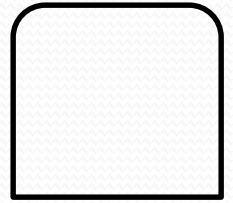
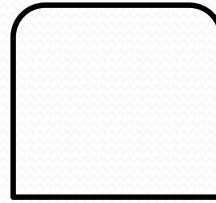
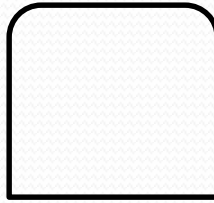
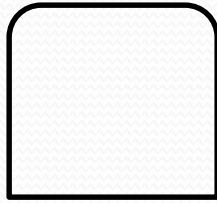
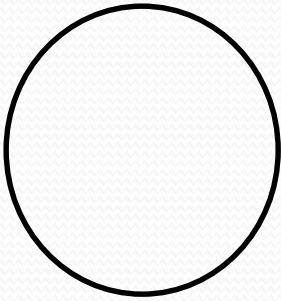
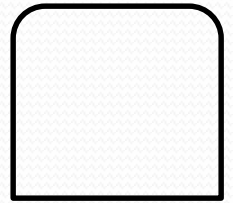
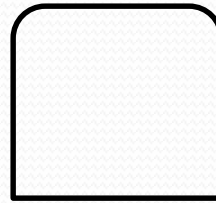
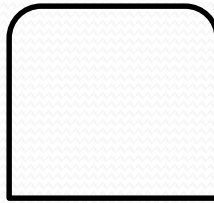
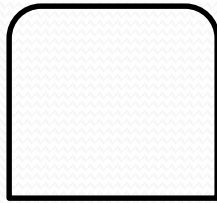
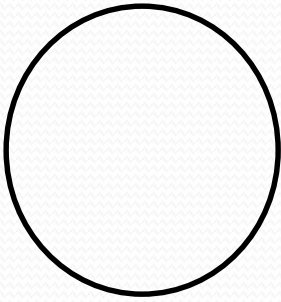
(The activity below I got from a [blog post from Cassie Stephens.](#))

The children need to create a sky and sections for their field. They then need to paint each section in a tint only (no primaries or secondary).

When dry, they should add patterns with small brushes in all the painted sections. Make sure they use contrasting colors so you can see the patterns.



Choose either primary or secondary color to put in each circle and then create tints and shade of those colors in the boxes next to them



Warm and cool colors

Warm colors are the colors of the sun, fire, sunset colors
(reds, oranges, yellows, pinks)
Cool are colors like oceans, lakes, grass
(blues, greens, purples)

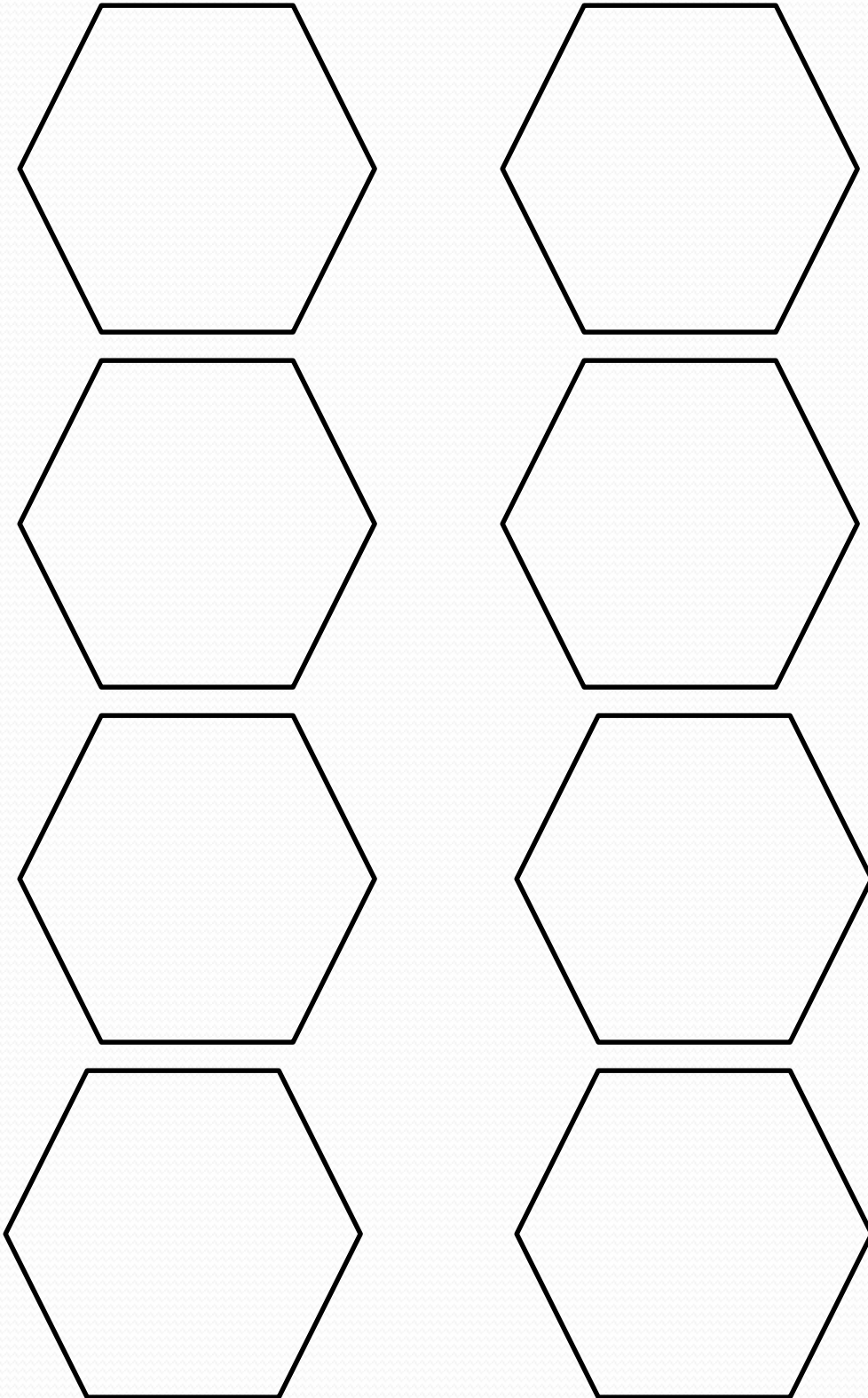
Have the children paint a sea with a variety of cool colors. Have them then draw (on another paper) a fish or two (give reference material.) Let them paint the fish with bright, warm colors. They can then cut it out and paste it onto the blue ocean.



Give the children different size circles . Have them decorate some of them with warm colors only and others with cool colors only. They can paste these on to a larger paper making a beautiful abstract circle piece.



Fill left side with warm colors
right with cool



Complementary colors

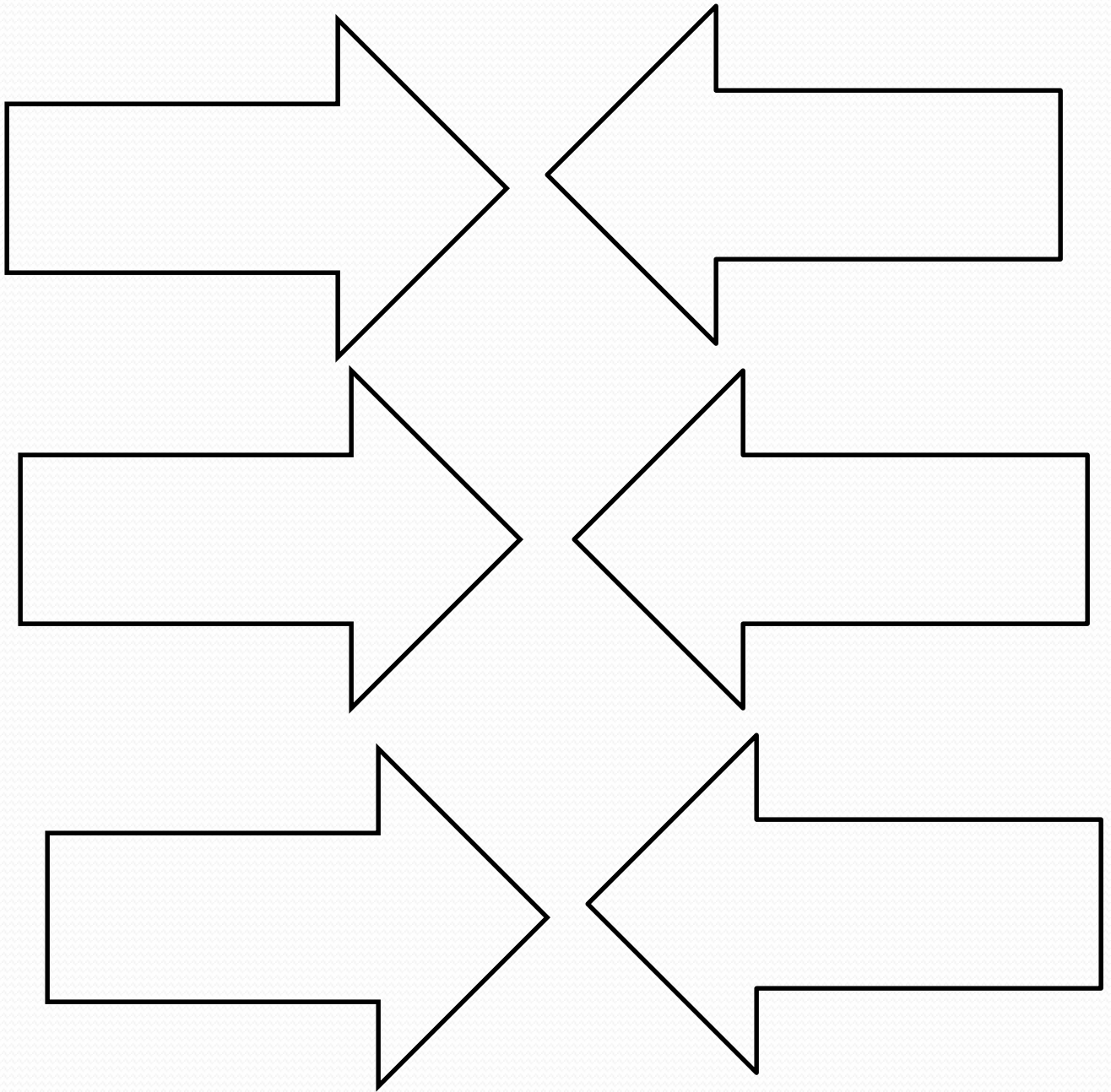
Complementary colors are colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel; these are also called contrasting colors.

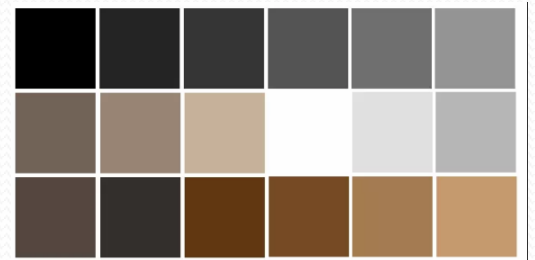
Paint blobs of colors on a page. Surround them with their complementary color. See how they pop!

Make a list of what color each of the items in a landscape should be.
For example: Sky is blue, grass is green.
Then have children look at their color wheel and paint the object the opposite color on the color wheel.

Sun -	yellow	?
Grass	green	?
Sky	blue	?
Red House	red	?
tree trunk	purple	?
tree leaves	orange	?







Neutrals are colors without color:
Black, grays, taup, browns, ivory, whites

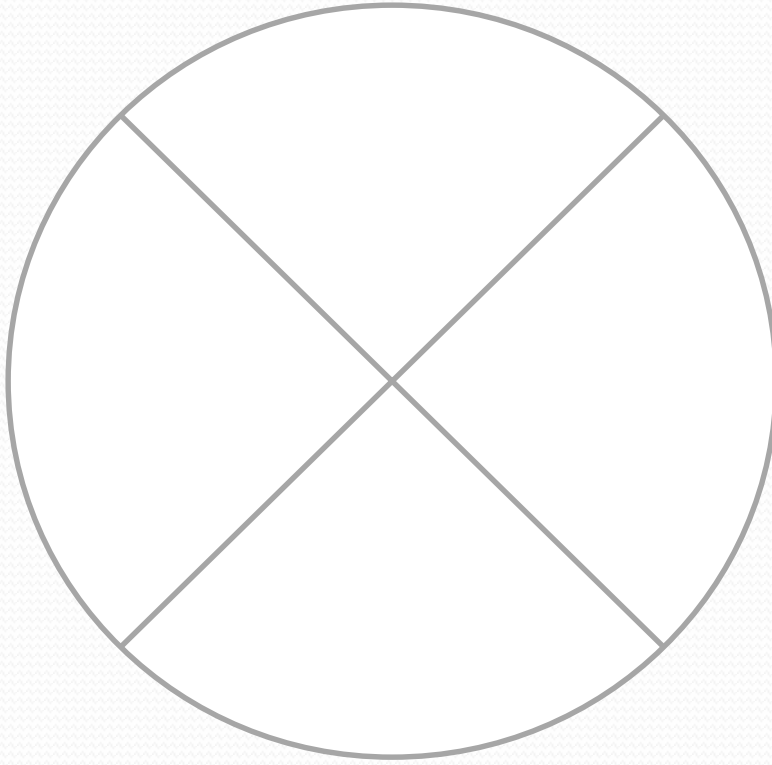
To create neutral colors, mix all primary colors together.

Also mix different complementary colors together to get various shades of browns and grays.

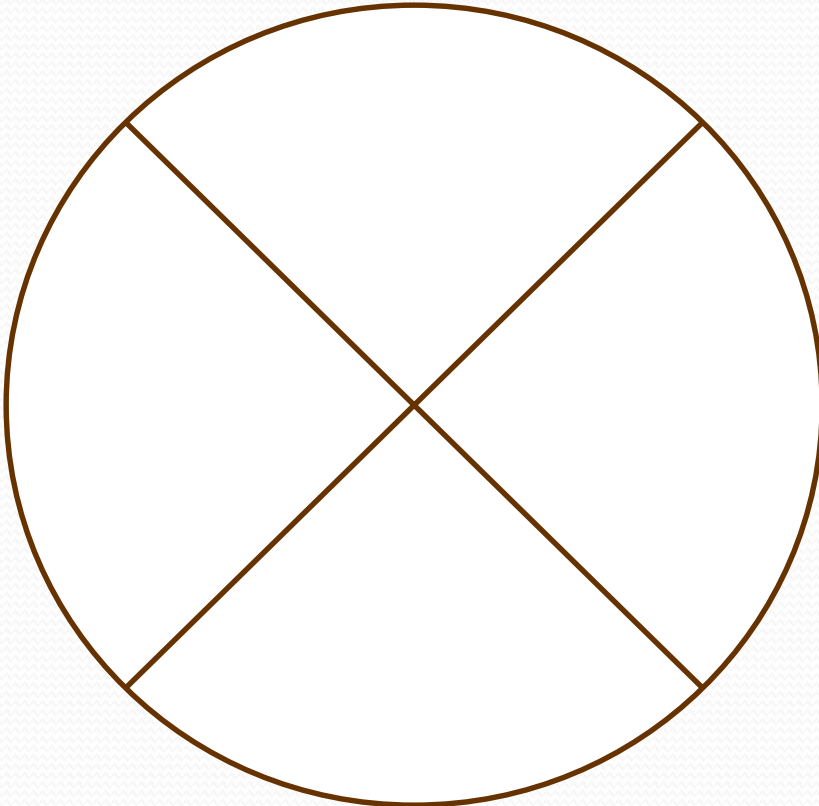
Have them create a picture using only neutrals including mixed neutral colors.

Give the children magazines and let them see if they can create the same variations of the neutral colors that they find.

Shades of gray



Shades of browns



Analogous colors

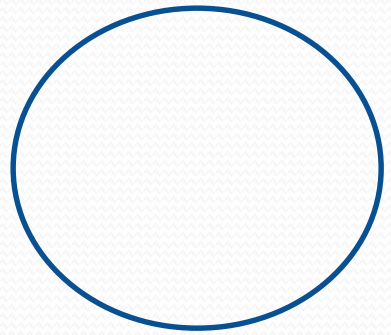
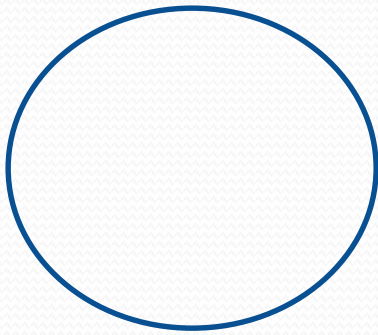
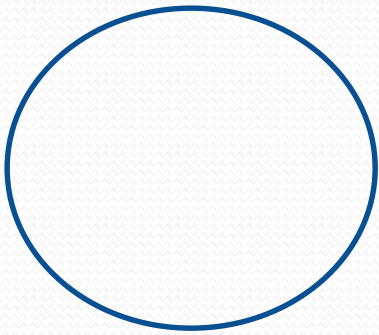
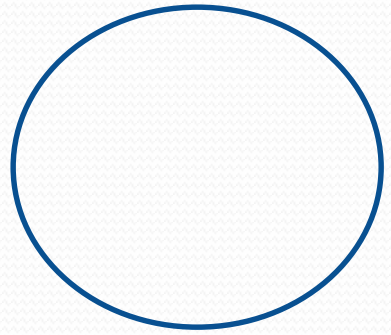
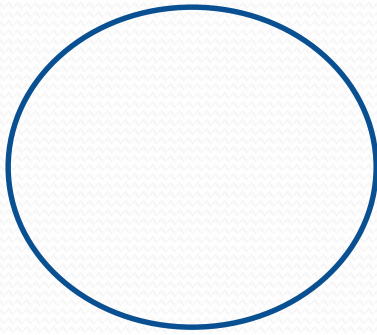
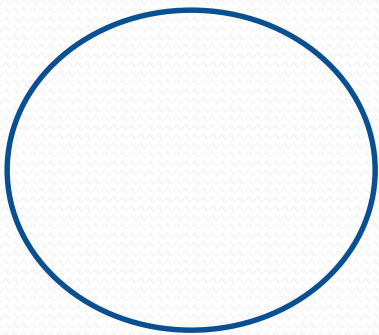
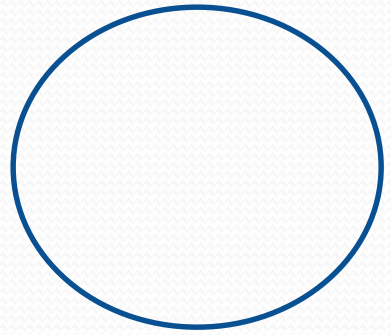
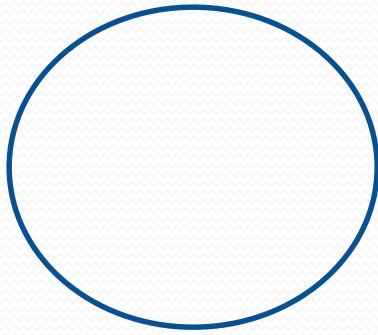
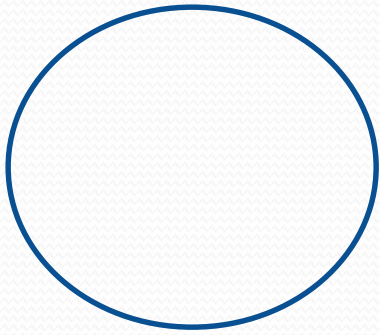


Analogous colors are next to each other on the color wheel. These make for a softer color palette than complementary or primary colors.

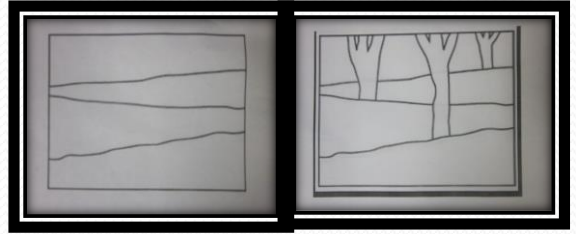
Using a pen or pencil, have the children make wavy lines across the whole paper. Fill a page with lines crating various thicknesses of spaces. paper. Fill the empty spaces with analogous colors.



Analogous colors are usually calming so have them make a picture that makes them feel happy or calm using analogous colors.



SPACE



Space in art is where things go on a page.

(I don't cover 1 point perspective since it is too complicated but these simple concepts are also about perspective).

The best way to learn about space in a basic way is to paint landscapes.

The landscape revolves around the horizon line.

That is where the sky and the land meet. Horizon lines are always straight across the horizontal span of a scene. If there are mountains, it is not the jagged mountains that are the horizon line but, where the base of the mountain meets the foreground.

We then learn what you can include in the background, middle ground and foreground .

Teach that the closer to the bottom of the page things are, the closer to you they are and that the higher up on the page, the smaller they get. The closer to you things are, the larger they usually are.

Also, teach them that things that are directly on the horizon line are far away and usually pretty small (like trees and houses.)

Overlapping is another space concept that they can learn.



Painting landscapes

- Its important to have landscape samples for this activity (see below).
- The children should decide how large of a sky they want and then draw a line across the page which will be their horizon line.
- They then decide what color sky they want and let them mix the colors they need for their sky and then let them paint their sky. (show them lots of sunsets and colored skies)
- If they want they can add mountains starting from the horizon.
- They then paint their middle ground/foreground. Those are usually either green, green and brown, or blue or gray for water.
- When their backgrounds are dry, they can start adding in items to their backgrounds, middle grounds and foregrounds .
- They can do this by drawing on top, painting on top or drawing on separate papers and cutting and collaging them in.
- Trees, houses, buildings, boats, birds, flowers, people, cars, etc. are all things they can add into their landscapes.
- The largest items go on the bottom of the page and as they move the items up, you can point out how they are further away.
- If they want things really far then they can add small houses or trees on the horizon line.



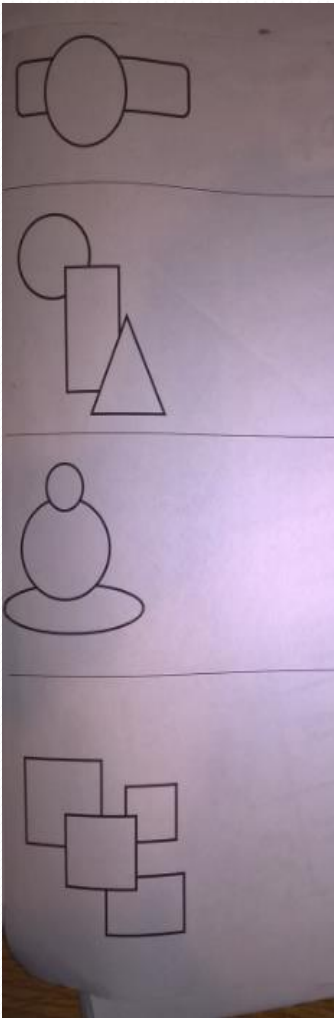
Below are some pictures of landscapes with sunsets and the colors used to paint those sunsets.



These landscapes had the backgrounds painted first and then the items were drawn on papers, cut out and pasted on. If the children want to paint the trees, house, etc., they will need to wait until background is dry.



Overlapping exercises



Using the chart on the left that shows shapes that are overlapping, the children can practice making their own shapes and patterns making sure to overlap a number of them. They need to know that the shape on top is in front of the ones behind.

This painting was done by some children learning about overlapping in perspective by overlapping people to show how the one in front is front of the one in back. See the link below for the post for this activity.

Check [link here for full activity](#)



TEXTURE

Real texture: Painting texture that is actually 3D.

The pictures below used thick paints to create the texture.



Implied texture: When the strokes of a painting are trying to simulate real texture but, the painting itself feels smooth.



Painting using real texture



Van Gogh's Starry Night is probably the most famous painting that uses real texture

To show thickness and texture in a painting (like Van Gogh's Starry Night), you need to use either full body acrylic paint or add something called gel medium to the paint to make it thicker. I've also used spackle (joint compound) to make the paint thicker and it works quite well.

It's best to use a palette knife to apply the paint. You mix some color with the compound and then the children can experiment making lines and shapes with the palette knife. You can also use stencils to slather the thick paint over. When you remove the stencil the image will be raised (as in the flower image below).

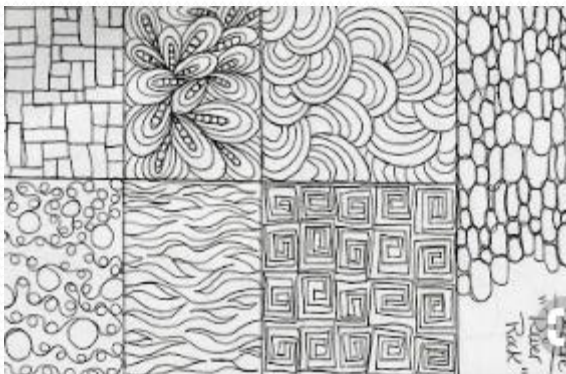


Painting using implied texture

Start by having the children make rubbings of textured items. They can then see the lines the textures make and try to copy them onto different papers.

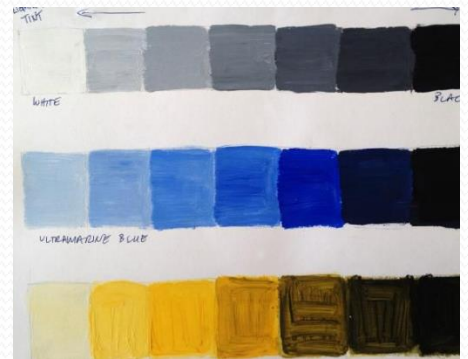


As they can see after they create the rubbings, making close lines next to each other shows texture. Having a texture chart for the children to reference will allow them to practice making lines that show texture.



VALUE

FORM



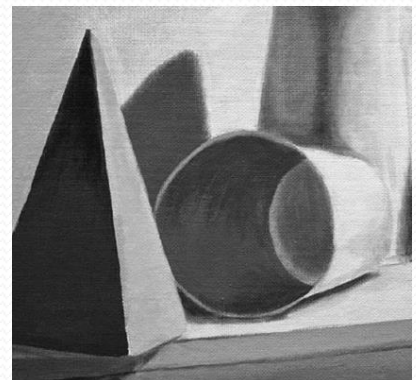
Value (shading with different tones of a color) is what gives object form. However it is a complicated topic for young children so there is only one activity I really use for value and I don't go into form in the painting curriculum.

Form is an element that I teach by using *real* form like clay, cardboard sculpture and paper mache.

Implied form which shows form through value is too complicated for young children.

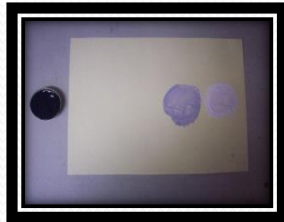
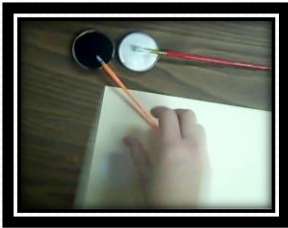


In the black and white pictures it's easier to see how the different values give the objects their form making them look three dimensional.



To create a value scale, start with black and white

Have them start with a white circle or square. As they make more and more circles or squares they add a little bit more black till they have a nice scale of whites, grays and black



A bit more of an advanced idea:

Print out high contrast pictures and have the children to try to match up the values by painting over it.

Principles of Design

- Repetition, rhythm and pattern
- Balance
- Symmetry
- Contrast
- Variety
- Proportion and perspective
- Emphasis (focal point)
- Movement
- Harmony and unity

Aside from the elements of art, there are also principles of design that are present in most art (listed above).

Even though I had no intention of including these principles as a part of this guide, I realized that I had some activities that dealt with three of these principles so I decided to just include activities from those three principles of design and composition.

Symmetry

Pattern/ Repetition

Balance

Symmetry

Faces and butterflies are both symmetrical subjects so you can do both activities. With the faces, they can draw a circle or an oval and they need to make sure that whatever they paint on one side, they paint on the other. With the butterflies, it's pretty much the same. They need to paint a body shape in the middle and then paint the sets of wings adding the exact same patterns to both sides to make it symmetrical.

Whatever they paint on one side they need to paint on the other.



This activity below is quite easy. You fold a paper in half then open it up. Have them paint on one side right near the fold then close the fold. Rub the paper and then open it to find a perfectly symmetrical pattern.



Patterns/ Repetition

Fold a paper into 6 or 8. Let the children choose a symbol or shape and paint it in each section. They can also do this without sections and can just paint patterns like any geometric shape and keep repeating it on a whole page



Find some patterned papers. Allow the children to pick one and try to paint its pattern onto another paper



Give the children some painters tape and have them make stripes on the paper with it. They can then paint over it. When they remove the tape the pattern will be very visible.



Balance

Stripe paintings make for a very balanced painting and there are many variations that I have included below.



- Use 2 colors and do thick and thin stripes.
- Use any colors to make stripes going in 2 different directions.
- Make stripes going in 3 directions.
- Use only secondary colors to make stripes.
- Make only diagonal stripes.
- Use one black stripe in your stripe painting.
- Give different shapes to create the stripes on.
- Make a number of smaller ones and mount them onto a large black background. It will be very striking looking.

Watercolors



Even though you can do many of the activities in the previous section with watercolors, watercolors is still different enough to warrant its own section.

Watercolors

The first thing to know about watercolors are the different types available

Type of watercolor	
Pans	These are the most common. The more expensive like Prang have more color saturation but, Crayola works fine.
Liquid	These are very concentrated and should be mixed with water before using
Tube	Rare to be used straight out of the tube. Many artists will squeeze them into pans, let them dry and then reactivate them with water

Pan watercolors



Diluted liquid watercolors



Tube watercolors on a piece of Plexiglas



Mixing with watercolors usually takes place on the watercolor paper itself. There is wet mixing and dry mixing. The wet mixing is when you put another color on top of a color that is still wet.

Dry mixing is when you wait for the paint to dry before putting another color on top. Let the children try both.

Let them begin by experimenting with what the paint can do when dry and wet.

They then can practice seeing how many strokes they can get out of a brush filled with paint and can then move to doing washes, a staple of watercolor painting.

Each type of watercolor is a very different experience. The pans are the most common, the liquid are very wet and the tube paints when wet seem more like tempera.

Creating washes

Washes are usually used as backgrounds for landscapes

- The first wash:** Start with a full brush of blue paint at the top. Take a brush full of color and paint across the top of the page. Then rinse brush with clear water with a wet brush keep painting all the way down the paper (they will see the color getting lighter and lighter)
- The second wash:** Wet the whole paper with a very wet brush. Then put a streak of color on the top and keep painting with it all the way down with the brush.
- The third wash:** Put some heavy blue on top, then heavy pink and then paint the pink all the way down.
- Fourth wash:** Wet the whole paper. Then do a heavy blue, then a pink line, then a yellow line. Wash down.

When doing washes use paper no larger than the 9x11.

The higher the number (lb) of the watercolor paper, the more absorbent and more expensive the paper. You can also use good 80 lb paper.

It's a good idea to have a sponge near the water to wipe off the brush. This way you don't have to empty the muddy water so often and it will help them keep the brushes clean before putting it into another color.

It's also important to teach the children that the watercolor brush should not be smashed into the paint but it needs to delicately dance on the paint when full of water to get more paint. (like a ballerina dancing on her tiptoes)

When they see or hear the brush scratching on the paper it means its time for more water.



Practicing washes

Here are some the basic watercolor techniques (including washes) that you can use with watercolors. When you need a very saturated brush then you may want to consider using the liquid watercolors.

Watercolor technique	Directions
Wash (instructions for different types of washes are on the previous page)	Load brush with plenty of wet paint. Smooth brush over paper with swooping strokes
Dry Brush	Start with a dry brush and almost dry paint. Run brush over paper to create scratchy lines
Salt	Sprinkle salt (preferably kosher salt) onto wet paper. Wipe off when dry. Interesting effect.
Crayon resist	Draw with crayon or oil pastel on dry paper. Paint wet watercolor over it to reveal the drawing underneath. If you use a white crayon, it's like magic when you paint over it.
Blot	Use paper towels to blot up wet paint to reveal paper underneath.
Wet-in-Wet	Paint clean water onto your paper. Before the water dries, load your brush with paint and touch it to the water. The color will spread quickly.
Tape masking	Tape sections of your paper with masking or painters tape. Paint over, let it dry, peel off tape to reveal the white spaces that were under the tape.
Plastic wrap	Put a generous amount of watercolor onto paper. While still wet, take plastic wrap or wax paper and scrunch it onto the paper. Allow it to dry and when you remove it, you will see the cool texture it makes.
Rubbing alcohol	Start with wet paint on your paper. Use a Q-tip, dropper or clean brush to add alcohol to the page and watch the effects.

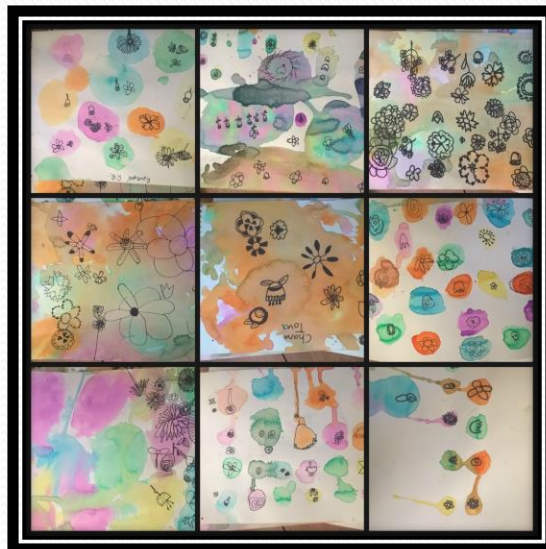
Tape resist: They can do this with their names or any holiday symbol, etc. They create their name or symbol by taping the page with painters tape (or masking tape), paint over with watercolors and when dry remove the tape.

Crayon or oil pastel resist: Give the children a white crayon or oil pastel to color with. When done, they paint with the watercolors. The white crayon will resist the watercolors and show through. You can do it with regular colors as well but its more dramatic with the white.

Dry brush: Good for things like creating grass in the foreground when making landscapes. Keep the brush very dry and use to create hard lines with brush.

For watercolor flowers: Make paper wet, touch brush loaded with watercolor paint to wet paper making drops all over the page. When dry, give children a black sharpie and let them draw flowers on top of small bits of paint. This will be their watercolor flower garden.

Another variation of this is to allow them to make a whole bunch of lines and squiggles with the paint. Then to allow them to make whatever they want out of those squiggles.



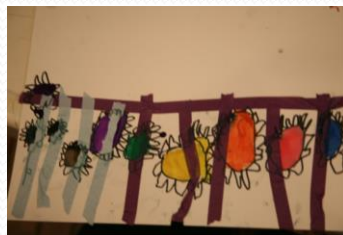
Watercolor flowers behind a fence

I mentioned tape resists before but, this activity takes the resist idea to create a bit of a more structured project.

The trick here is to have the children put down tape as if they were drawing a fence. They make a fence with the tape.

They then draw flowers on top of the tape and above the fence with a thick waterproof marker. When done drawing, they can paint in the flowers with watercolors.

When they remove the tape it give the appearance as a flower garden behind a white fence.



Painting your way out of a corner by:

Barbara Diane Barry

A couple of years ago I read the book listed above which helps you become more creative by confronting your fears of being creative. She suggests watercolors for all her activities.

When working on this guide I realized that I had pictures of some of the activities I did when going through the book and that they could easily be used with children. I went through them all and chose the five that I think children can do easily as well.

- **Do a dot-** Start with a thick brush saturated with paint. Paint dots around paper using the tip and then the whole brush. Change colors. Add details with a small brush. Make smaller, larger details and overlap. Add dots in groups. Put light next to dark. Join together.
- **Coloring book 101-** Use large brush and black paint and make a simple scribble design. Fill in 2 or 3 shapes with black. Fill in the rest of the shapes with color. When dry add small shapes to black areas. Then add repeated shapes in black to other colored areas and add other colored areas.
- **Make a scary creature-** Make a large shape any color. Let the creature appear by adding head, tail, claws, fangs etc. Add details-arms, legs, tails etc.
- **Doing the brush stroke-** Load moist brush with color. Lead with the tip and paint lines from left to right twisting and turning as you go. Add parallel lines above and below. Experiment with zigzag, wavy,. Vary widths of lines and speed and pressure. Finish by adding dots.
- **Gazing at the clouds-** Load brush with black paint. Take it for a walk around the paper. Let the brush twist and turn. Allow it to form shapely blobs and lines (nothing recognizable) and do it slow. When done, choose one blob or squiggle and flesh out with lots of detail. Add colors and patterns to shapes. Close lines to make new shapes. Add more dots and brushstrokes with different sizes and colors and fill in colors.

These are pictures of all of the activities above





Special Projects

These four special projects were originally done with adults.

I've done all of them and I realized that they were easy and open enough to be used for children so I added them here to use for special projects.

Mask it out

Mask it out is a fun activity that I often do at my art parties (which you can [check out here](#)). I discovered that this project can be done with ages 4-100 so I decided to include it here.

You can start by Googling “silhouettes of _____” (flowers, birds, people, trees, animals etc.) Copy and paste them into a word doc, enlarge and print them out. Cover with either packing tape on both sides or laminate and cut them out. (I’ve also cut people with exaggerated poses out of magazines and used the packing tape for those too)



Take an empty paper or canvas and have the children fill the background with paint using a variety of techniques.

- Let them pick a few colors
- Paint background with one color
- Dab with some fingers on top of first color with another color
- Add some stencils to background and paint through with 3rd color
- Add a different pattern stencil and paint through in places with 4th color
- Take some bottle caps or other object you find and stamp with white
- Rip up small pieces of paper from the classified section of newspaper and collage in a few places
- Write some words with big letters with some dark oil pastels across the page

After they finish making a gorgeous mess, you choose a mask, (as seen above) cover the mess with the mask and paint around it with the color of choice. (black gives best coverage and the most contrast). When done remove the mask to see the painted background underneath in the shape of the mask. When dry they can enhance the background too by adding details with paint pens.



These two made by young children

These were made by me

Expressive trees

This activity is similar to mask it out. I did this with a group of second graders and their moms.

Start by putting small dabs of paint (acrylics) all over the background covering up whole background. (The dab sizes are pretty flexible depending on the ages of the kids as you see one of them is not dabs)



Once the background is covered allow it to dry. Then, using a dark oil pastel or crayon draw a basic tree with a trunk, some branches and some leaves. Draw a horizon line somewhere under the branches.

Paint the space under horizon line (you can paint it a ground color or any color). Then paint the top either a sky color or any other color. The trick here is to paint around the leaves so that the colors of the background show through the leaves.

If you want the leaves to be of certain colors like fall or spring colors keep that in mind when adding the paint in the first step on to the background.



Flowers from imagination

I got this idea from an online class I took with an artist called [Sandrine Pellisier](#). Below is the project I did but again, it is one that I think can be easily adaptable for children.



Have them choose a color scheme for the background and paint up an abstract background. I used an assortment of acrylic paints and inks in the blue family.



When dry, let them take a white crayon and make scribbles all over the whole background.



Now its time to find a vase shape and flower shapes in the scribbles. Using a black pastel or marker, find a shape for a vase among the scribbles and on top look for flowers in the shapes. As you can see, the vase can be misshapen and the petals of the flowers can be totally from imagination.



Then they can paint around the shapes of the base and flowers that you made. Painting first with white gives a nice background to finish up.



They can then add stems, a table line, leaves, and any kind of embellishments on the vase or on the flowers and background.

Watercolor flowers

This activity is a resist using tape.



Using wet, juicy watercolor paint, have the children paint over the whole background.



When dry, rip pieces of painters tape into circles and place all over the page (you can use masking tape too).



Paint over the whole page with white. When dry pull off the painters tape, let them fill in the circles with all kinds of petals and then add stems and leaves if they'd like.

Motivation and Inspiration

Most children will need motivation at some point or another. There are those rare few who always know what they want to paint and have no problem doing so but, most will reach a point where they want to paint and just don't know what to paint.

There are a number of ways to help motivate children and give them inspiration. The motivation and inspiration will vary according to the age of the children. In this guide there are many ideas that you will be giving to the children. However, what happens when they just want to paint their own thing but need some help?

A chart I have up in my art classroom



This chart is a way to get children to start understanding where they can get ideas from.

What they see – Still life displays, pictures of things like animals, flowers etc.

What they remember – Trips they've been on, events they've been to, etc.

What they imagine - Pure imaginative type of art like Dr. Seuss.

What they feel- Paint can show emotions like anger, sadness, happiness, etc.

Making marks- Using shape, design and color to create paintings.

Children should be shown lots of artwork from different types of artists. I love showing lots of abstract work because children get hung up on being "an artist" and having pictures look like the real thing so it's very empowering for them to see abstract art which is often things they can also do. Plus, these works usually hang in museums giving them more credibility.

Sometimes, however, children will need some more direction so below are some ideas and prompts for you to be able to give the children ways of starting.

- o Think of something tiny and paint it large.
- o What kind of lines can you make with your colors? How will you arrange them?
- o What colors and shapes will you make in your picture today?
- o Fill the whole space except for a small square or circle.
- o Will your background be outdoors or indoors?
- o How would you paint yourself if you were lost in a big city?
- o How would you paint a storm?
- o How would you paint a summer day?
- o Paint using sleepy colors.
- o Repeat a color in your painting 3 times.
- o Paint a sky at the airport.
- o A rainy day
- o A city at night

If they want to make something specific but can't get started, there are a few ways to help them move on:

1. *Give them a few different pictures of the item they want to make. Make it clear that they can choose which one to use and they can take parts of one and parts of another for one picture. Example: If they want to do a landscape, they can make the sky one color and add in different things that are in that landscape or a house. They can use the roof of one and windows of another, etc.*
2. *If there are no pictures, ask them to draw the shape in the air of what they want to make and then to put that shape down on the paper. Then ask and what else what goes into that item.*
3. *If they want to make a person or an animal, ask questions like where will this person be? Inside a house? Outside? Playing ball? In the zoo? Sleeping, etc.*
4. *You can use one of those mannequins for the children to set up in the position they would want a person to be in and it is much easier to paint it when you see it in front of you.*

Commenting on children's' artwork

It would seem that this does not need a section on its own. However, the way we comment on children's artwork is something that can actually be beneficial or detrimental to their growth.

Of course, no one can be tuned-in 100% of the time, and nothing will happen if you react improperly once in a while (so long as it's once in a while . . .) The point here is try to help children reach their potential and by being aware of how we comment on their work it will help the children develop properly.

Comments to avoid

COMPLIMENTING: "That's beautiful..." "That's very good..." etc. Of course, we all do this and think we are doing what is best. However telling a child their work is beautiful all of the time is overused and pat. They are compliments that lack sincerity and really don't address the child's efforts. A child may well begin to wonder how it is that his representational man and his sisters scribbles elicit the same reaction, and will begin doubting your sincerity.

VALUING: "I like that." Children's art should not be done to please adults. This shows a value for the product over the process. (again once in a while is fine)

QUESTIONING: "What is that?" Many young children cannot verbalize what they have made or are not even ready to make representational drawings

CORRECTING: "A person does not have 3 heads," etc. Children's art is not supposed to copy the real world. It is experimentation with materials and art media and children tend to see the world differently than adults do.

I'm sure it goes without saying that holding up another sibling or child's work to show is inappropriate because it fosters unhealthy competition and inferior feelings in the other children.

So what SHOULD you say to a child's work?

All you really have to do is really look at the artwork and comment on what you see.

There is nothing more gratifying and empowering than having an adult actually notice what you did.

Sometime the child may have actually thought before putting the red next to the blue but, if he didn't then this may help him think in the future about where he puts things.

Some ideas of what you can say to a child when you are looking at their work.

"I see you used 2 colors."

"I noticed you used a lot of blue."

"You made many thick lines alongside some wavy lines."

"I've noticed that you repeated this pattern a few times."

"You used a lot of white space."

"You covered the whole paper this time with paint."

"I see you were moving your arms in circles as you drew."

"Those colors you used really pop"

"I see you really enjoyed painting that"

Or you can say:

"Would you like to tell me about your picture?"



I hope you have benefitted from this eBook/guide.

I hope it helps you help children reach their potential in creativity through painting.

For other types of children's art, check out my site www.eduart4kids.com

For adults creativity check out www.creativityreignited.com

If you need to reach me you can contact me through my sites.

Thank you so much for joining me on this journey

Faigie Kobre