

Activity 6 – Sandpaper Pictures

Lay a piece of sandpaper down, rough side up, on a flat surface. Make sure the paper is not so rough that it could easily cut little fingers. Give your child cut pieces of colored yarn to attach to the sandpaper. The yarn will stick to the sandpaper—no glue required! When you get tired of one picture, just take the yarn off and start over. Make sure your child is old enough to understand that he or she must not rub the sandpaper on any nice surfaces (like the table) or put their fingers in their eyes, nose, mouth, etc., until after they have washed at the end of their craft. Some sandpaper leaves a fine grit on hands and skin that they will need to wash off.

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Activity 7 – Sticker Pictures

Get together a pile of stickers—lots of stickers! Have your child start drawing a picture of whatever he or she wishes. Then pull out the stickers to provide more creative options. If you have themed stickers, draw a background (or encourage your child to) and allow your child to make the scene using stickers (example: sea creature stickers: use blue paper; farm animals: draw a barn; etc.).

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Activity 8 – Button Scene

Allow your child to make a scene on a piece of paper using buttons of different colors, sizes, and styles. The pictures turn out so cute. She can dump the buttons and start over again and again, or they can glue the buttons in place to hang the picture for display. (Be sure the child is old enough that she would not put the buttons in her mouth. Buttons could be a choking hazard.)

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Activity 21 – Fun with Variety

Listen to a variety of music and dance around to it. How does it sound like you should move? Some music sounds like soldiers, some like ballerinas, and some like animals. Clap rhythms. Take turns making up a new one for the others to imitate.

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Activity 22 – Classical Music

Many of you probably already do this, but playing a classical music CD for your child is a fantastic way to introduce him to this genre. Put music on and dance; put music on as you play with play dough; put music on in the car . . . the possibilities are endless.

Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite is fun for young ones. Each dance ("Sugar Plum Fairy" and "Russian" to name two of the most popular) has a distinctive sound and dance style.

Symphony No. 94 in G major, by Haydn, is also called the *Surprise Symphony* because it starts off soft and mellow and then bellows out a chord which surprises everyone. The story behind this piece is interesting and a good way to introduce a composer to a young child. Bach's *Little Fugue* in G minor is another nice piece, and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (*Ode to Joy*) is inspiring. And you really cannot go wrong when you pick anything of Mozart's. These are just a few examples to get you started. You will find others as you begin listening.

I also encourage you to check out musicals, ballets, and operas from the library. You might be surprised by what your child is interested in. By borrowing the material, you are not paying out large amounts of money as you would for a live performance, but, by all means, please attend live performances as well, as often as you can. At age four, my daughter surprised me one Sunday afternoon by watching the entire *Swan Lake* ballet, though she only made it through a small portion of *Fiddler on the Roof* the following week. My 3-year-old son cannot get enough of *River Dance*. You will never know if your child enjoys Mozart's opera *Die Zauberflaute* unless you try it.

Preschool Playground: Arts, Crafts & Music

Section 3: Pretend Play

Activity 31 – Dramatic Play

I realize some of us aren't lucky enough to have an extra space for a school room, but don't worry, many of these ideas can be created in a living area or even in your kitchen. Young children love to imitate their world. Pretending to be someone else is natural and a creative part of themselves.

When I mention dramatic play, you might think of a kitchen center setup or a dress-up box, both of which are fine. Other ideas might be to create a pet shop. Gather a few boxes, some stuffed animals, play kitchen dishes, and a set of doctor tools. The boxes can be the cages the animals sleep in. You can add a kitchen dish to each box for animal food. You could even add a cash register for paying for supplies, or you could have some scraps of material for bandages. You can really create any kind of store this way.

You can create an area for a little secretary by using an old typewriter (we used an old computer keyboard that had stopped working). Other tools to go with this are pencils, crayons, envelopes, stamps, and old junk mail. My daughter always loved the fake credit cards that came in the mail. She also loved pretending to fill out the forms that came with them.

Another great idea that was a hit with my older and younger children alike was discovered after we moved into our current home. We had lots of boxes left, so we folded all the flaps in toward the inside of the box. We painted them and added black painted paper plates for wheels and a black plate for a steering wheel. We had made cardboard cars. We had a bigger box, too, that more than one child could go in, so we made that one a fire truck. Make some road signs to go with it, and your children can play for hours. Take it outside and make a course to drive through. Honestly, we had made these over the summer, and they played with them all year.

Another use for boxes is to create a puppet stage (or simply throw a sheet over two chairs). Get creative; the ideas are endless.

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