

A–Z of teaching young learners: Craft activities

What and why?

In the Storytime section of each unit, and in some exercises in the Activity Book, children have the opportunity to make objects, which are related to the story. These are designed to help them become more involved in the stories, to encourage their hand-eye co-ordination and to help them learn language in a meaningful context. Craft activities also enable children to take the language out of the classroom, to build a bridge with the world outside. Children learn how to cut, trace, copy, fold and colour as well as how to follow instructions. Craft activities also have a very important role in making learning more memorable, by associating a tangible object with it. You may feel that you don't have time for craft activities. However many teachers have found that they make a lot of difference to the participation of the children and their positive view of the classroom – all of which can have a significant impact on motivation.

Practical ideas

- Before the lesson, make time to follow the instructions in the Pupil's Book or Activity Book and in the Teacher's Book, and make the craft item yourself so that you can establish where any problems may arise, how long to allow for the activity and what equipment and space you need.
- Show the finished craft item to the children before they start work.
- Before starting the activity, make sure that the children have enough space on their desk or tables. Ask them to clear the desk of all other books, etc. It is often useful to spread newspapers on the desk for craft activities – this will not only protect against glue or paint spillage but will also establish that this is a different kind of English activity.
- Ensure that any tools that the children use are not dangerous. Scissors, for example, should be children's scissors.
- Allow time for the children to look at the pictures of the activity in the book it may be useful to have a poster on the wall with pictures to show the meanings of key words such as cut (scissors), trace (tracing paper), fold (a piece of paper being folded), colour (felt tips), etc.

- Encourage children to work in pairs or small groups. You can experiment with different compositions of the groups – for example, boys and girls working together, boys and girls in separate groups. While the children are working together, go round and help, but work on your own model at the same time so that the children can see what needs to be done. Sit with the children at their desk and do be done. Sit with the children at their desk and do the actions with them.
- If the children make craft items which they will need for future lessons (such as the hats or masks, for example), make sure that they write their names on them, and keep them in a special box or cupboard in the classroom so they can be found easily.
- Allow time at the end of the lesson for the children to tidy things away. This provides a useful opportunity for additional language experience. For example: Put the glue in here, please. Put the newspaper in the bin. Put the hats over here to dry. Write your names on the back. Who can help me put the paper away?

You can find more craft ideas in the extra activities section in the Teacher's Book.