

Activities: Rocks and Crafts for all Ages

People have long used natural materials such as bone, wood, shells, fibre or stone for artistic expression. Some of the most lasting creations have used rocks and minerals. Today, we can appreciate rock-based art created anywhere from many thousands of years ago to the present day because of the endurance of stone. From prehistoric pictographs (drawn or painted) and petroglyphs (carved) on cave walls and the famous Stone Age Venus figurines through to spectacular Greek friezes, intricately carved Asian temples (Angkor Wat) and Renaissance masterpieces, rocks and minerals have yielded incredible art.

Your kids can also produce works of art with rocks and minerals. First of all, they are natural collectors; how often do kids go home with rocks in their pockets? Ask them to use any rocks and minerals they have collected to create a short “show and tell” video to share. Naturally creative, they can then transform their rocks into beautiful pieces of art, with some additional lessons, guidance and resourcefulness.

Primary School-Age Activity: Rock Walk ABCs

Take your kids on a rock walk where they can collect rocks along the way. Guide them to choose some with smooth surfaces that would be easy to paint. Your kids will paint the letters of the alphabet on the rocks, so you will need 26 or 52 rocks. Alternately, buy a collection of flattened, tumbled river stones.

Materials

26 or 52 rocks
Liquid or solid water-based craft paint, various colours (e.g., Tempera, poster paints)
Paint brushes, fine and broad tips
Aprons and smocks (cotton, nylon, and/or polyester)
Clear spray lacquer

Instructions

1. Have kids put on aprons or smocks.
2. Rinse the rocks to remove soil or dust that would prevent paint from adhering.
3. Select a base colour paint for the rocks, e.g., white or black.
4. With a broad brush, paint the base colour on the part of the rock that will serve as the face.
5. Allow the paint to dry thoroughly. Drying time will depend on the type of paint used.
6. With a fine brush and various paint colours, paint the 26 letters of the alphabet on the rocks, upper case letters only.
7. Once the paint has completely dried, an adult should spray the rocks with clear lacquer to protect the paint from wear and tear.
8. Follow steps 2 through 7 to create a second set of alphabet letters, this time with lower case letters.



Kids can now learn the alphabet, spell their names, or create new words with their crafty rocks!

Middle School-Age Activity: Canada Rocks! Keychain

Middle school is a time of transition, with many kids experiencing changes in school and home life. For some, this might be the first time they are considered responsible enough to have their own house key. Why not mark this milestone by having them create Canada Rocks! keychains for their first set of keys? Alternately, they could make paper weights or even door stops, depending on rock size.

Materials

One long, smooth and flat rock
Pencil with eraser
Metric ruler
Red and white tempera paint
Maple leaf template (Can be found at firstpalette.com)
Brushes
Clear spray lacquer or clear nail polish

Instructions

1. Rinse the rock to remove soil or dust that would prevent paint from adhering.
2. Paint the top of the rock white and allow the paint to dry thoroughly.
3. Divide the painted space on the rock into three panels, similar to those of the Canadian flag. The centre section should be twice the width of the panel to the left or right.
4. Fill in the left and right panels with red paint. Leave the centre panel white.
5. Using the pencil, trace the maple leaf template onto the middle of the central panel.
6. Go over the maple leaf outline with red paint and fill in.
7. Allow the paint to dry completely, then spray with clear lacquer.



Assemble the Keychain

Materials

Painted rock flag
Keychain with jump ring,
bell caps
Epoxy or jewellery glue
Paper clip or toothpick
Round-nose pliers
Sand or molding clay

Instructions

1. Decide where on the painted rock the bell cap will be attached. Fit the bell cap snugly over the rock, using pliers if necessary, ensuring the bell cap fingers are all in contact with the rock surface. One or two of the bell cap fingers could be cut off to ensure a secure fit.
2. With a toothpick or paper clip, lightly coat the inside of the bell cap with glue. Make sure to coat the underside of all the bell cap fingers.
3. Place the glue-covered bell cap on the part of the rock it was shaped around.
4. Once the bell cap and stone are together, place the rock in the sand or molding clay so that the bell cap is sticking straight up.
The glue could take from 15 minutes to two hours to set and harden completely. Placing the rock in the sand will ensure that the cap remains in the position it was set.
5. Once the glue has hardened, attach the bell-capped stone to the keychain. Using two pairs of pliers, hold the keychain jump ring on both sides of the opening; push one side backward and pull the other side forward.
DO NOT PULL IT APART. If you pull it apart it is very difficult to get the ring to close properly.
6. Slide the bell cap loop onto the open jump ring. Using the pliers, close the jump ring.



High School-Age Activity: Purple and Proud – A Provincial Keepsake

While many may know that the provincial flower is the White Trillium and the provincial bird is the Common Loon, few know the provincial mineral emblem. Ontario's mineral emblem is the Amethyst. Adopted in 1975 as Ontario's official mineral emblem, Amethyst represents the mineral wealth of the province. It is a form of quartz that is found in clusters throughout northern Ontario, concentrating around the area of Thunder Bay. Amethyst crystals in that area are believed to be over one billion years old.

Have your teens create beautiful Amethyst necklaces for themselves or to give as a gift. They will each wrap an Amethyst stone with a cradle of copper wire and attach it to a cord or create a macramé knotted gemstone bag. If you don't have a sample of amethyst - use any rock or mineral sample.



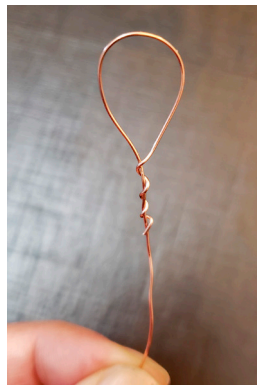
Gemstone in a Copper Wire Cradle

Materials

A roll of medium gauge copper wire
Tumbled Amethyst stones or other regional gemstones
Waxed cotton / hemp cords or chains
Long-nose pliers
Clear nail polish

Instructions

1. You will need 30 cm of copper wire, an Amethyst and enough cord to meet their desired length of necklace.
2. Using fingers and long-nose pliers, wrap the copper wire around the stone in several directions. No two cradles will be the same since each gemstone has its own unique shape and each teen will use their discretion on how to best cradle the gemstone.
3. Twist the copper wire together at the top of the stone to hold it in place.
4. Create a loop for the cord to pass through.
5. Coat the wire and stone with clear nail polish to prevent tarnishing and allow to dry.
6. Thread the hemp/cotton cord through the loop and tie the ends together.



Gemstone in a Macramé Pouch

Materials

Waxed cotton or hemp cords
Gemstones of your choosing
Scissors
Beads (optional)

Instructions

1. Measure four equal lengths of cord. The length is determined by how long your teen desires the finished necklace to be. Keep in mind that knotting will take up some of the cord. Try using 125 to 150 cm to start with.
2. Line up all four lengths of cord beside one another. Tie them in a knot in the centre with a single base knot. This will result in eight equal length strands to work with to create the gemstone pouch.
3. Separate the strands into pairs and tie a knot in each pair; keep in mind the size of the gemstone you would like the bag to hold. If the gems are small, the paired knots should be tied closer to the base knot. This will result in a smaller weave, preventing stones from slipping out.
4. From the initial set of paired knots, tie each strand to the neighbour it is not knotted to. Notice as you continue to do this that the pouch shape starts to form. Keep tying neighbouring strands together until the desired depth is achieved (refer to size of gemstone).
5. Once the bag size for the stone is achieved, take four strands in each hand and tie a knot at the top of the pouch on each side. You will then have two necklace lengths, each with four strands.
6. Using a four strand braid method, braid together the four strands on each side of the necklace.
This step may take some time depending on the length of cord and your ability to braid.
tinyurl.com/4strand
7. Once braids are complete, slide one bead over both braided strands of the necklace, then tie a knot at each end of the braided sections to prevent them from unravelling.
8. To finish, tie both ends of the braids together at the desired necklace length.

