The 6 best, most creative, almost no mess activities for kids ages 3-7

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Welcome to “The 6 best, most creative, almost no mess activities for kids ages 3-7”.

I think I know what made you download this guide...it was the no mess part of it, right? Because for the most part, most people think of creative and activities and ages 3-7 as being inevitable messy.

And we all know that most parents (and many teachers) HATE mess.

So before I begin with this guide I just want to make one thing very clear.

Messy is GOOD! Messy for kids GREAT! Messy activities like paint, clay, paper mache and other similar types are wonderful and very necessary for children’s growth and development. There are actually many activities like that on my site Edu Art 4 Kids and many other sites.

(If you are willing to do messy activities but, just to learn how to contain the mess then check out this post 10 tips on keeping messy play clean.

However, there are times when we don’t want any mess, can’t deal with messy and that’s what this guide is for. For those times.

So this report is about 6 great, creative, non messy, developmentally (age) appropriate, engrossing activities that you can do with your children.

In order for the activities to be included in this report they had to have the following criteria:

- No paint, no glitter, no wet, gray clay. The messiest it gets is glue.
- Activities had to be able to be done with kids ages 3-7. (Even older kids can do these activities but, the results will of course vary according to age.)
- They cannot be copycat crafts.(which means crafts that follow exact directions & all look the same)
- The activities are for the most need to be able to either be continued day after day OR, can be done again and again without the children getting bored and feeling like the activity is repetitive.
1-Sewing

Kids love to sew. Even boys. The type of sewing I do with kids is what I have been doing with my students and my own children for years. (No small, sharp needles involved)

When I first started out sewing with kids, I was using the Plastic Canvas pieces for them to sew on. (image below). I used to pick them up at my local Michael’s crafts store but, you can buy them from Amazon, online or other crafts stores as well.

At one point I started giving these sewing crafts projects to even younger children than I normally did, and realized the holes were too small for such little hands. I therefore, started looking for material that had larger holes than these plastic canvas pieces.

I found that Michaels sold blank hook rug material, which was the perfect solution. You can of course, buy it online. I don’t have any images of it here but, you can take a look at Blank Latch Rug Canvas to see what it looks like.

This material is much more flexible than the plastic and the holes are much larger. The only thing you have to keep an eye on for this type of material is that it can sometimes unravel around the edges. What I do to help out that issue is edge the edges with tape. (Colored tape is even better, as it can become a frame for the work)
The next thing you need for these sewing projects are needles. The best kind to use are aluminum Tapestry Needles. They are blunt so they don't stick the children and they are very easy to work with. There was a period of time that we used the plastic tapestry needles but, I really don't like them as they bend easily and are just in general very junkie. The silver, aluminum blunt tapestry needles are the best for these sewing projects.

Make sure to buy enough of them. No matter how many I buy we always seem to lose them even though they are quite large. The best way to keep them from getting lost is by keeping them in the sewing projects the children are in middle of working on.

The last thing needed to begin the sewing projects is yarn.

You can buy yarn online or at many of your local big box stores like Walmart or Kmart (if you live in the states). There is no need to buy the more expensive yarns for these projects. There are many very high quality wool and specialty yarns that are sold for knitters but, that is truly overkill for this kind of sewing.

Some important Do's and Don'ts

- It is important for an adult to be very close by. The children can make many mistakes in the beginning and you need to be there to undo their mistakes. The older children will usually just need you to help them knot their last piece of yarn and start a new piece.

- There are two ways that the children can sew when they are going around the edges. They can just keeping putting their needle in the material from the bottom which makes a border for the piece, OR they can just do down and up.
• You need very fine motor control to see exactly where to put the needle in the right place and I have found that most 3 yr olds cannot manage this activity, especially on their own. However, if they are a more advanced 3 yr old and you sit with them as they go in and out if may work.

• If you see that they are making too many mistakes then stop the activity and give them some easier sewing activities. You can find some here.

• I always only did this type of sewing with a small group. It is difficult to do it with too many children because it can get out of hand. It’s a perfect activity to do with individual children.

• Start them off with one color and they can switch or use the same color when they finish up that piece of yarn.

• Some children like to sew for the sake of sewing. Other children want to make something out of their project. If they know before they begin what they want to make, then it may make it easier for you as you can then decide what size and shape piece of sewing material you will give them.

For example: For a bookmark, I would cut the material into a small rectangle. While for a purse I would make it larger so there is room to fold over and close up when done.

Below are some ideas that you can use if the children want to make something from their sewing’s.

• **Wallets** - Fold over and use velcro to close into wallet.
• **Pocketbooks** - Same as wallet but, add ribbon or yarn for strap.
• **Bookmarks** - Give them small rectangular pieces to sew.
• **Frames** - Cut out the frame before and have them sew all around.
• **Wall hangings** - Just frame the pieces they have sewn.
Book making is a wonderful activity. The books can be used to summarize experiences that the children have had, or they can be imaginative stories (or any topic). Sometimes a good use of these books is a catharsis for traumatic event. I once taught a little girl who had a robbery in her home. She could not stop talking about it. After we sat down and made a book about what happened she stopped obsessing about it. Very often children who cannot talk about difficult situations they have in their lives are able to do so when they are given the chance to draw about them.

Even a new baby in the house, which while exciting for us, can be quite traumatic for an older sibling. Making a book about it, helps them get their feelings out in the open.

Books are a wonderful pre-reading activity. The children are observing the mechanics of reading. Left to right progression, spaces between words, punctuation etc.

They are also learning that reading is “talk written down”. Children get a good feeling about reading when they get to make their own books. The
books give them a feeling of ownership

**Sample topics**

- What I want to be when I grow up
- My Family
- My dream
- My new baby sister
- All of my friends
- How I feel when....
- My vacation
- The day we had a fire
How to...

The Early Reading books consist of pictures that the children draw and text that the adult writes based on the dictation of the children. If the children are a bit older they themselves can write the words.

Individual books can be as elaborate or as simple as you’d like.

The way I’ve done it in a quick and simple manner is to take a few white sheets of computer paper, put a colored piece of construction paper over the front paper, fold in half, staple them together at the ends and Voila! a book.

In one case scenario you can have the child make a picture on one side and in very, very clear, legible, manuscript write down what the child tells you on the other page. It is important to write as clearly as possible as this is where the children are getting their initial introduction to writing and reading.

If you want more space then you can have the child draw at the top of each page, draw a line on the bottom and write what they tell you over there.

To make a more professional looking book follow steps below that I found from this web site. The basic pamphlet uses 3 holes to sew through. Many types of decorative paper and handmade paper can be used for the cover, and silk and metallic threads can be used for sewing. (I have used regular yarn or embroidery as well)

Materials:

- 3 or 4 sheets of photocopy paper or computer paper
- 1 sheet of medium weight art paper for the cover (or construction paper)
- 1 piece of heavy thread, embroidery floss, or thin decorative cord which is 3x longer than the length of the spine of the pamphlet.
- #18 tapestry needle or any large-eyed needle
- Awl or push pin
- Kitchen towel, folded in quarters lengthwise
Process:

1. Measure and cut the cover sheet 1/2 " taller than the text paper. Cut the paper 1" longer than the text for a fold-in at the edges. If using a sheet of handmade paper, the fold-in will not be necessary, so just have the extra 1" measurement. Score the cover paper and fold in half. Then mark 2" from each, score, and fold.

2. Score and fold the text sheets in half. Slip one inside another until the sheets nest together. This forms the signature.

3. Put the folded sheets inside the cover and open up the book, making sure to line up evenly the 1/4" margin on the top and bottom. Put paper clips on the top and bottom of the book to keep the pages from moving. Place the open book on top of the folded towel. Measure the center along the fold line and punch a hole with the awl or push pin. Then make 2 more holes from both edges.

4. Thread the needle. Sew through the middle hole (#1) to the inside of the book, leaving a length of thread to tie a knot, and sew up and out of the top hole (#2). Sew down the outside and into the bottom hole (#3), and come back out at the center hole (#1). Tighten or adjust the thread if necessary. Tie a bow or knot and trim thread to the desired length.

Note: The knot can also be tied on the inside of the signature. To do this, start on the inside of the book instead of the outside.
Cutting: don’t laugh it’s a REAL activity for kids. I got the idea to use simple cutting as one of the 6 activities from a post I saw on a site called Pink And Green Mama. It was a scissor cutting practice activity.

I realized that kids love to cut and it really can be a whole activity in itself. There are a few ways to do this.

- Make sure you have blunt children’s scissors.
- Do not use tissue paper or cellophane paper as they are too difficult to cut. Cardboard and wallpaper also shouldn’t be used as they are too thick to cut.
- Start by teaching the children, if they are new to this, to rest the bottom of the scissor blade on the table when they cut.
- They can practice by cutting pieces of clay that they have rolled.
- Cut out strips of paper from pieces of construction paper and let them cut them into squares. (They can collage with them after)
- Another thing they can do with those long strips is to cut them a bit at the edges making fringes.
- After this you can draw lines on the paper and have them cut down the lines.
- As they progress, add wavy lines and other more difficult lines. Then draw simple, basic geometric shapes for them to cut out.
- Finally you can then put a whole assortment and sizes of easy to cut paper in a box along with a scissors. You can add different size and shape papers and add more as they go along.

Have a bag or a box ready for them to put their cuttings and they may decide to do something with their pieces and they may not...just let them cut.
(If you want you can add a hole puncher to the mix as well and see what happens)
There are so many collage activities kids can do ONLY with shapes, why not give them a bunch of collage activities just with the basic, geometric shapes.

Normally, when adults give children a bunch of old pieces of paper from left over projects to collage with they get bored quickly. If however, you can present them with new types of collage challenges each time, you will be amazed by how creative they will be with them.

For these activities you will need different colored construction paper, glue, tag board for the background. (It is stiffer than construction paper) and the geometric shapes circles/squares/triangles/rectangles.

The formula is: Include shape, color, size & material. Mix and match along with different shape background.

You may want to put each finished collage in a sheet protector to make a shape collage book.

Some variations of the formula that you can use are:

- All colors, one shape, all circles a few sizes
- One color 4 shapes
- All squares 3 colors different sizes
- All triangles a few colors different sizes
- All rectangles a few colors different sizes
- Use large circle for background and only circle pieces
- Use large circle for background and a few shapes
- Use triangle background and only triangles
- Use triangle background and a few shapes
- All tiny shapes
- 2 sizes...very large shape and very small shapes
5-Drawing & coloring activities

These activities do not include any representational drawing. Just some more directed drawing and coloring activities.

Uses nice, colorful markers. Crayons may be too bland and pastels may be too messy.

Activity 1

The way to start off this activity is by collecting all kinds of materials to serve as templates. Below is an image of some that I gathered at one point for this activity. You will notice that I also have some shapes that I had that had been cut out of tagboard. You can use store bought templates and or stuff from around the house.

Before the children started I ended up removing the larger baking pans shown above as I realized they were too large. In general smaller items will work better.

The children should use the objects to create designs all over their pages. They can overlap them as well. Then they color them in. Let them use the rich colored markers as their designs will be much more vivid. Below are some of the gorgeous drawings the children made.
One mistake I felt I made was I gave them an object, which was a weird looking scissor that ended up looking too realistic. They are so fixated on realism that some of them were concentrating too much on this template as a realistic object.

When I tried it with another group of kids I did not include that funny shaped scissor and got more abstract results.

**Activity 2**

The second activity turns into a pasting activity after the cutting.

The children should make scribble scrabble pictures (as they like to call it) with a pen or pencil. They need to then look for different shapes in their scribble scrabble's and to outline as many shapes as they could find within their pictures with a black marker.
It is a very interesting experience for the children and a new way of seeing shape.

After they do, this they color in their shapes using any of the markers or pastels you have. They often end up making interesting pictures from their shapes. If you want to continue this activity then you can have the children cut out their shapes and collage them onto a separate piece of paper.

**Activity 3**

**Hole drawings** is something I saw on The Artful Parent blog. You basically give your child a paper with a hole in it or another shape and let them draw all around it. They get more creative when they have to think out of (or around) the box.

**Activity 4**

**Drawing dice game** is a game I saw on Tinker lab blog.

You take dice and make pictures of different shapes on each side. The child throws the dice (or one die) and then has to draw the shape that the dice falls on. They can connect their different shapes or not.
Weaving, the last of the 6 activities is really very similar to sewing.

You need yarn, and good eye hand coordination. In this case however, you can use hands or a needle to move the yarn in and out. The basic idea of weaving is going under and over (the warp and the weft) and can be a bit more difficult than sewing.

There are a few ways to weave. The first one is the classic paper strips weaving but, that is not engrossing and doesn’t take a whole lot of time.

There are places like Discount School Supply that sell weaving looms. There are small individual ones and a larger more collaborative one. I found that the really young kids have a hard time with the smaller ones but, the older 6 and 7 yr olds handle it better.
The best thing to do is to use a big one, either made out of a wooden crate or a custom built one. When you have all the strings in you collect all sorts of long material like yarn, ribbon, raffia and other pretty things and the kids can just weave in and out. It can become a beautiful wall hanging.

Here are some links for you with some other simple weaving activities.

- [Weaving with a styrofoam produce tray](#)
- [Paper cup weaving](#)
- [Other weaving ideas](#)

Well...that’s it. 6 Activities. Creative. Mostly not messy and quite engaging.

I hope you got something out of it and would love to connect with you.

You can connect with me at:

- **My blog:** [www.eduart4kids.com](http://www.eduart4kids.com)
- **Twitter:** [www.twitter.com/eduart4kids.com](http://www.twitter.com/eduart4kids.com)
- **Pinterest:** [http://pinterest.com/faigie](http://pinterest.com/faigie)
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Looking forward to getting to know you better

*Faigie Kobre*