



CRAFT PROJECTS GUIDE

Craft projects are recommended for Circle meetings and play an important part in the life of every well-organized Circle. In this chapter you'll find tips for organizing successful craft projects, suggestions for tried and proven crafts, and resources to help you find the latest in creative and engaging crafts.

BENEFITS OF CRAFT PROJECTS

When you and your child work together on crafts, you help your child develop a sense of accomplishment and pride in his or her work. Successful crafting within the YMCA's Adventure Guides program produces these results:

- Develops fine motor skills
- Stimulates creative thinking
- Develops sequencing skills
- Contributes to individuality and pride in work
- Allows crafter to note similarities and differences
- Allows members to make connections to a theme
- Produces a product to share or give to others

CRAFTING TIPS

Advance preparation is the secret to successful craft projects. The attention span of the five- to nine-year-old is short.

- Plan projects that last about 15 minutes. For best results, remember the following guidelines when it is your turn to host the Circle or plan the craft project.
- Select projects with care, taking into consideration children's ages, skills, and development.
- Start out with simple projects and build up to more difficult crafts.
- Help the parent and child work together.
- Know the craft well yourself. Complete a sample before the meeting so that you know how long it takes to make the craft and if any glitches might arise in the project.
- Have all materials ready in advance, divvied up for each parent-child pair.
- Arrange distribution of materials for a quick start.
- Plan teaching steps carefully, involving all parents and children. Explain the crafts as clearly as you can (diagrams sometimes help!).
- Be aware of safety factors and group behaviors so no one gets hurt. This is particularly important when using cutting tools or electrical equipment.
- Allow time to display completed projects, if possible.
- Watch for parents who inadvertently take over the child's tasks (also watch for parents who sit back and let the child do everything).
- Expose children to a variety of craft media—paint, wood, paper, plastic, clay, leather, metals, plaster of Paris, and so on.
- Evaluate the craft program in terms of success and need for improvement.

CRAFT IDEAS

Keep crafts simple in the first year, such as making nameplates and armbands. Add a level of difficulty in year two. By year three, you'll need to be more creative to keep children engaged in your craft projects. When planning crafts, take advantage of the skills and hobbies of the parents, and don't be afraid to try new materials or bring in outside expertise. Here are some suggestions for common craft projects:

- Award ribbon holder
- Hot pad
- Letter opener
- Seed collection
- Box for pins
- House number sign
- Photo albums
- Shoe shine box
- Door stop
- Key case
- Pottery work
- Slingshot
- Flower pot
- Key holder for wall
- Roster of Circle
- Stamp collection
- Hat rack
- Magazine rack
- Salad bowl
- Tic-Tac-Toe board
- History of the circle
- Mail holder
- Sand painting
- Circle plaque
- Holiday decorations
- Napkin rings
- Seashell collection
- Circle sign

AND HERE ARE SOME OTHER, LESS COMMON, CRAFTS TO CONSIDER:

Clothespin Wrestlers. Each member "dresses up" a regular clothespin with eyes, ears, colors, and small bits of ribbon or cloth to create his or her own world-class wrestler. The wrestling match is staged by placing two clothespin wrestlers inside one large rubber band. Holding the two wrestlers, twist the rubber band as tightly as you can. When ready, release the wrestlers on a "mat" and watch them go! The wrestler who ends up on top is declared the winner.

Maps. Map projects are great ways for young members to learn about their surroundings and their history. Here are two ideas for map projects that can be started at a Circle meeting.

Town Map. Each member traces a local map onto a piece of paper, including all major streets and town boundaries (as an alternative, you can pick up local maps at the Chamber of Commerce). Parents and kids work together to plot their favorite spots or places of importance, such as libraries, schools, an ice cream shop, city hall, and historical buildings. Challenge each parent and child to pick a spot on the map, and then have the young member navigate his or her way to the destination. Report back at the next meeting!

World Map. Re-create a world map on a large piece of paper or inexpensive linen sheet. Using different colors or pins, members show where they were born, where their grandparents were born, and, if possible, where their great grandparents were born. Talk about ancestors. Look for overlap. How are members similar? How are they different?

Recycled Paper. Have each member bring in some scrap paper. Tear the paper into small pieces and place in a pot or tub of water. Stir. Cut an old screen to the approximate size of paper desired, and give each member a screen and a cake pan. Press the wet paper mixture onto the screen inside the cake pan so that the moisture is removed and the paper mixture is flat. Turn the screen over and let the new paper peel off the screen onto a piece of cardboard. Let dry. Write a letter on your new paper and give it to a friend. (Careful—this one is a little messy!)