

Handicrafts in the Colony



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Craft activities form a significant part of many Beaver Scout Programmes. One of the five Programme Zones is 'Discovering Creativity and Practical Skills' which focuses on helping Beaver Scouts develop a range of creative and practical skills, however there are opportunities for handicrafts existing in other Programme Zones too.

Handicrafts encourage:

- creativity and concentration
- dexterity and determination
- imagination and ingenuity
- patience and perseverance

Over a period of time, Beaver Scouts should experience a variety of approaches to craftwork:

Sometimes they may be trying out a craft technique such as printing, marbling, and modelling clay. In this case the experimentation may be more important than the finished product as the Beaver Scouts explore the technique and materials, and experience varying degrees of success and failure.

Sometimes they may be making something specific to take home, to sell or to give as a present. In this case the product is important and, while individual ideas may be included, all concerned will want the finished article to look good.

Sometimes they may be asked to use their imaginations or solve a particular problem in their own way. In this case, the Leader's role is to provide a range of resources and encourage the Beaver Scouts to think of different approaches and techniques. The outcomes will be as different as the Beaver Scouts themselves.

Basic principles

Whatever type of craft and activity is being offered, there are some basic principles to follow:

Keep it simple and consider the time needed. Can it be completed in a short period of time, say 15-20 minutes or is it a long term project.

Ensure enough resources are available with extras provided in case of mistakes. Do you need specific items or a range of materials available?

Encourage Beaver Scouts to do all their own work, thus developing the skills they have with the encouragement of the adults.

Try to stretch the capabilities of each Beaver Scout.

What amount of information is needed before? Varying ages and abilities should be recognised by varying the amount of preparation done by Leaders and the amount of help offered during the activity.

Consider carefully the organisation of the handicraft session. Beaver Scouts can:

- work as a Colony with adults helping generally

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- work in small groups or Lodges with one adult for each group
- work as individuals moving to different adults for different stages of the craft
- work in pairs or small groups on collective models or crafts
- be withdrawn from the rest of the Colony in small groups to do the craft.

Take time to admire and talk about the crafts with individuals and the Colony as a whole.

Handy hints

Prepare the Beaver Scouts! Do you need to remove scarves or sweatshirts or simply roll up sleeves? Bin liners with holes cut out for the head and arms make simple inexpensive overalls.

Cover any precious surfaces, floors, walls, tables and so on, it should make cleaning up quicker! Newspapers and old sheets are fine.

Select scissors with care. First and foremost they must cut. Small round ended ones are not always the best. What is important is that Beaver Scouts are taught to handle scissors safely and use them successfully. Teach the skills of cutting in a straight line, cutting a circle and cutting out a hole.

Choose carefully what type of paints, pencils, crayons, felt tips, pens etc. you offer to the Beaver Scouts. Each has advantages and disadvantages for different purposes. These are often available through Local Authority play resource centres where, for a modest membership fee, there is usually a wealth of experience, advice, scrap resource and cheap craft items.

Help Beaver Scouts practice colouring between lines, painting and crayoning smoothly, pencil and

brush control and the use of tape, staplers, glue applicators, hole punchers etc.

Experiment with double-sided tape, sticky fixers, staples, fasteners and various types of glue. There is nothing more frustrating than the wrong adhesive for the job! Paper clips and clothes pegs are handy for holding glued parts together while they dry.

Find a way of naming or identifying each Beaver Scout's creative efforts. This will ease problems when it comes to handing them out at the end of the meeting. A collection of old carrier bags is useful for sending items home in.

Make full use of your local library and children's bookshop to trigger off ideas.

A string or clothes line and a supply of clothes pegs or paper clips is a simple way of keeping finished masterpieces out of harm's way and will help the drying process.

Have bowls of warm soapy water and a supply of towels at the ready for washing hands immediately. Hand printing is fine, but not all over the walls, other people or their clothing

The final tip is to think about yourself, what you are going to wear and how you are going to cover yourself. You will need to feel relaxed too!

Resources

The golden rule with craft resources is to ensure you have enough of everything. Adjust the size of the groups to make sure there is enough to prevent unnecessary delays in the activity.

Scrap resources to save

- Paper and cardboard of different textures, colours and thickness
- Old magazines
- Scrap material and fabric
- Cardboard tubes
- Wallpaper books
- Egg boxes
- Wool scraps
- Shoe boxes
- Washing-up liquid containers
- Plastic bottles
- Cereal packets
- Shells and pebbles
- Yogurt and cream cartons
- Margarine tubs
- Soft drink cans
- Matchboxes

General resources to buy

- Scissors
- Tape
- Glue
- Pencils, crayons
- Felt tips
- Rulers
- String
- Staplers
- Hole punchers
- Paper clips
- Clothes pegs
- Straws
- Blue tack
- Paintbrushes of different sizes