

“Solar System Project”

Alejandra Valera

Ohdeedoh, February, 2010

Often the lines of art and science intersect, and it is at that intersection wonderful things are possible. One afternoon, my son and I were reading a book about the solar system when it occurred to me that he'd probably learn more about the solar system if we threw ourselves into it, rather than just read about it.

A solar system collage is a great way to learn about the planets -- while spending fun craft time together. To get your project going, start with some research. Your child may have some questions, after all. What color is Mercury? How big is Jupiter? The Web site [Kids' Astronomy](#) is a great place to start. The start page features an animated graphic of what the solar system looks like, with each planet in its orbit. It also features information on each planet (including Pluto. YES!) and gives children all the fun facts that seem to fascinate them like how long the planet takes to orbit the sun, where its name comes from, and what it looks like. We also love the NASA page [Welcome to the Planets](#) which displays gorgeous photos of each planet.

While conducting your research, ask your child what they see, and jot it down. Which planet is the largest, which was the smallest, what colors are they? The research and investigation is almost as fun as the art part itself.

Once your research is done, begin putting your solar system together. To make your solar system, you'll need:

- Two sheets of 11" x 18" black construction paper
- Yellow and orange tissue paper
- Glue
- Colored chalk, colored pencils or crayons
- A paint brush
- Various scraps of colorful paper (Our friend is an avid scrap booker, so we are always getting her good leftovers!)
- Scissors

Get two sheets of 11" x 18" black construction paper and tape them together. If you don't have black, blue will work also. If you don't have blue, use whatever you like. It is your creation, after all.

Next, draw your sun and an ring for each planet's orbit. Once you have that done, you can begin creating your sun. Using yellow and orange tissue paper, have your child glue small crumpled up wads of the tissue onto the sun. The created effect will be a blazing, colorful sun.

Have your child pick out the paper for each individual planet. Based on our research, my son picked out the colors he thought were best suited. He was excited to find we had an orange-y marbled paper which he declared, "...looks like Jupiter!"

Our afternoon of reading a book ended with an impromptu fun, entertaining and informative craft. If your child isn't interested in the planets, what about dinosaurs or plants or robots? Any subject of interest can easily be transformed into a simple cut and paste project.

By combining some cutting and gluing, and a nice dose of research a simple arts & craft project became so much more. And the best kind of learning, is the learning that comes via an entertaining way. Have fun!