



3 Simple Shifts for More Engaging and Inclusive Arts & Crafts Handout

The following 3 shifts, when applied together, can completely transform your approach to arts and crafts, creating activities that are even more engaging, inclusive, and accessible for participants of all abilities.

The 3 Shifts:

1. Focus on the Journey, Not the Destination

- **What It Means:** The joy is in the process– arranging, exploring, and discovering–rather than attaining a specific, predetermined goal.
- **Why It Works:** It removes the pressure of a “right or wrong” way to engage with the materials, fostering creative freedom and self-expression instead.
- **Tips for Application:**
 - Avoid showing a finished example to prevent setting expectations.
 - Celebrate effort and exploration rather than outcomes.
 - Encourage participants to take ownership of their work and decisions

2. Create Temporary Art Projects Instead of Permanent Ones

- **What It Means:** Enjoy the process of creating designs or scenes that can easily be changed, rearranged, or taken apart, rather than being glued or fixed permanently.
- **Why It Works:** It reduces stress about making mistakes and allows for experimentation.
- **Tips for Application:**
 - Use trays to define boundaries, making it easier to organize and manage.
 - Encourage participants to rearrange pieces and experiment with new combinations.

- Incorporate higher-quality materials that can be reused for future projects.

3. Expand Material Choices Beyond Traditional Supplies

- **What It Means:** In addition to offering familiar craft materials, include a wide variety of “loose parts”, such as natural items, everyday objects, and repurposed or recycled materials.
- **Why It Works:** It broadens participants’ worlds by introducing new and unfamiliar items, provoking fresh ideas, thoughts, and memories.
- **Tips for Application:**
 - Think outside the box and have fun with it! Present materials that are unique or unexpected to spark curiosity.
 - Tap into the senses by including materials that are textured, aromatic, colorful, or have interesting sounds or weights, inviting participants to explore with their senses.
 - Rotate materials regularly to keep the experience exciting and engaging.

Quick Takeaways:

- Keep the experience open-ended and pressure-free. Foster an “it’s all ok” mentality.
- View each activity as a journey, where every participant can explore their own agenda. This will keep it exciting for you, too, because you never know what might come about.
- Above all, let creativity flow with versatile, sensory-rich materials.



The Art of Presentation Handout

The Gradual Reveal

The 3 simple shifts provide an effective framework for creating inclusive and engaging hands-on experiences. By incorporating the “Gradual Reveal” technique when presenting materials, we can elevate engagement and inclusivity to the next level.

The “Gradual Reveal” technique is a powerful way to prevent overwhelm, build curiosity, and maintain focus in creative activities. By introducing materials progressively, participants can fully explore and enjoy the process.

Why Use the Gradual Reveal?

- Reduces overwhelm by limiting the number of choices presented at any one time, making the process feel more manageable.
- Builds anticipation and excitement as new materials are introduced.
- Helps maintain attention span by providing a steady flow of materials.
- Allows participants to decide whether or not they want to use each material, giving them a sense of control and autonomy.
- Encourages participants to experiment with each item or grouping before moving on
- Prevents sensory overload by keeping the workspace uncluttered.

How to Implement the Gradual Reveal

1. Introduce Materials Gradually.

Begin by offering one material at a time or in small groupings. Place the items next to each participant's tray, encouraging them to arrange the materials in any way that feels right to them. The gradual approach allows for exploration without overwhelming them.

2. Highlight Objects for Engagement

Periodically, take the opportunity to highlight an object. Share interesting facts, a story behind it, or ask an engaging question such as "Can anyone guess what this is used for?" This invites curiosity and sparks conversation, enhancing the experience.

3. Adjust Based on Group Pace

Be mindful of the group's pace. Observe their engagement levels and adjust the material distribution accordingly. Ensure no one feels rushed, or left behind, allowing everyone the time they need to engage with the materials at their own pace.

4. Respect Material Preferences

Acknowledge that participants may have different approaches to the materials. Some will explore all the options, while others may be more selective, preferring to focus on a few. Some may eagerly touch and smell everything, while others may quickly reject items. The key is to respect their choices and make it clear that every material is optional. If they like it, they can use it. If not, that's OK!

Tips for Success:

- **Pre-plan Material Sequence**

Plan the order in which materials are introduced. Start with larger pieces and gradually introduce smaller items. If certain materials naturally pair well together, consider presenting them as a set.

- **Organize with Clear Plastic Bags**

Use clear plastic bags to keep materials organized for each stage of the reveal. This ensures that you can easily access and distribute items while maintaining an organized flow.

- **Encourage Exploration with Open-Ended Questions**

Foster creativity by inviting participants to explore materials in new ways. Ask questions like, “how might this piece fit into your design?” or “How else could you use it?” Encourage them to try different approaches and have fun experimenting.

Example: *Simple Seaside collection*

- **First offer: kinetic sand**

Draw attention to how cool it is and how it feels almost like wet sand at the beach.

- **Then offer: a condiment cup and mini shovel**

Demonstrate how packing sand in the cup allows it to hold its shape once removed. And how the shovel can be used as a tool to shape the sand.

- **Then offer: a variety of shells**

Invite participants to incorporate some or all of the beautiful shells into their arrangement.

- **Then offer: driftwood pieces**

Ask an inquiring question like “Does anyone know what this wood is called, or how it got to be so smooth?” This can serve as a conversation starter.

- **Then offer: plastic grasses and seaglass pieces**

Provide texture and visual interest by providing the grasses and seaglass together.

- **Then offer: paper seagulls on sticks**

Lastly, offer their “final touch” of the seagulls to complete their arrangement.



Examples of “Loose Parts” Handout

Arts & Crafts items:

Popsicle sticks
Pompoms
Buttons
Feathers
Gemstones

Natural Items:

Stones
Shells
Bamboo pieces
Seaglass
Wood slices

Recycled:

Bottle caps
Soda can tabs
Cardboard tubes
Corks
Puzzle Pieces

Repurposed Materials:

Keys
Sponges
Wood spools
Napkin rings
Metal nuts

Granular Materials:

Rice
Dried lentils
Dried pasta
Aquarium gravel
Sand