

INTRODUCTION



Picture books are an excellent way to engage and empower kids.

KIDS LOVE PICTURE BOOKS. Not only do they take instantly to stories, they feel connection and even ownership over the characters within. This makes picture books a perfect connection to and even to teach art and to empower kids (who already consider themselves artists) to stretch their skills. With this book, you can encourage them to apply professional techniques in their own unique ways, creating their own characters, scenes, and stories. These are the true building blocks of an illustrator's vocation.

Plus, there are so many cool picture books available today. The industry has exploded in the last twenty years, and books are the highest quality, cheapest, easiest way to look at really great art for both kids and adults. So this book is for you and me too; it's a love letter to books, why they matter, and how we can continue to learn from them.

Why Me?

Growing up in a tiny town in rural Iowa, picture books were my lens into a bigger world—and my only real experience with art. I grew up on Dr. Seuss, P.D. Eastman, the Berenstains, and Richard Scarry. These books made me a student of rhythm, a lifelong reader, and, eventually, an **author/illustrator**. As I grew up, I continued to check out picture books by the basketful, finding new illustrators to adore and new ideas to use in my teaching. I





Caption TK.



got in the habit of starting my art classes with a picture book related to the project. It was a failsafe way to grab kids' attention, and it gave them the added pride of knowing they were working "just like real artists." This progressed to building art classes around picture book techniques, which I taught through the Multnomah County branch libraries in Oregon, for more than a decade.

Although kids like to learn about intriguing materials and techniques, their primary need is the freedom to create and experiment. I have taught art almost everywhere—schools and libraries as well as hospitals and shelters, farmer's markets and summer camps. My specialty is making art accessible and appealing. So, most importantly to children, these projects are just plain fun. Chosen from hundreds of lessons for kids ages 2 to 16, the projects in this book are the ones my students loved the most.



Experiment with the projects in this book to see what type of art your child enjoys doing the most.

How to Use This Book

Making Picture Book Art Projects encourages learning through experimentation. Think of it like a recipe book. All of the projects are a jumping off point for your own ideas, and you don't have to do them in any order. Some sections you might skip completely. Most, I hope, you will try with your children.

Here is what you will find inside, arranged roughly by the type of **media** used:

- A short introduction to a contemporary illustrator and their art style or process. These illustrators are the current generation of picture book stars. Many of them use different techniques and outside-the-box approaches to traditional story design, and they come from all corners of the world.
- A three-step art project, complete with a supply list and illustrated instructions. Designed for the adult novice, the format focuses on clear instructions and easy-to-find materials.
- Examples of finished artwork made by REAL KIDS, not adults pretending to draw like kids.

- Additional picture books that are similar to the featured illustrator in style and/or process. Look these up before or after you complete the project to grow your library of favorites.
- Some extra things you might find on the pages:
 - Variations for doing the project a different way, with a different **medium**, or with a group.
 - Extra suggestions for kids who get really into the work.
 - Templates to copy for a quick start to some of the projects.
 - Art vocabulary that ties into a glossary at back.



Many of these projects are good for groups and will build skills across a school year. Follow the general order of the book and pick out the ones that seem most relevant.

Where Do I Start?

Like with a recipe book, you can flip through this book with your kids until you happen upon something that sounds delicious. But there are other ways to start too:

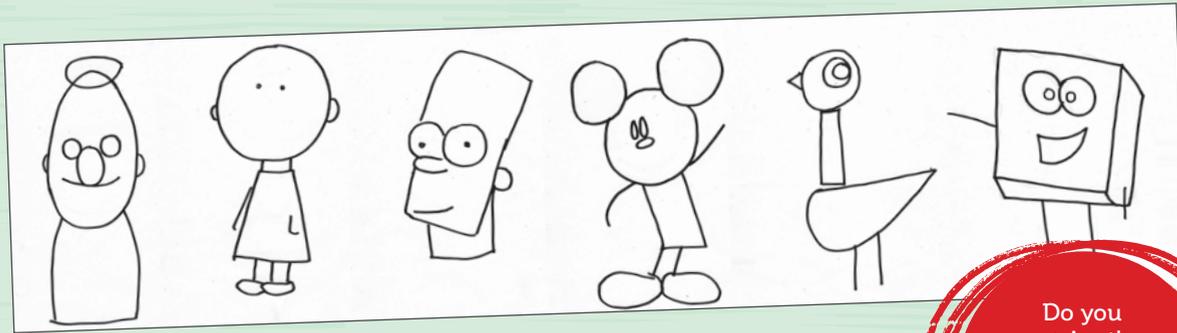
- 1) Start with a medium your kids are comfortable in. If they tend to color more than draw, they'll probably enjoy everything in the painting section (pages 66–82). If they don't sit still, try the last section on strange and unusual materials (pages 83–99). Once they complete a project they really enjoy, they'll be more likely to try some of the others that are outside their comfort zone.
- 2) Find a book or illustrator that your kid already adores by looking through the title/author index at back (pages 124–125). When you “read” the book again before the project, do it without words. Turn the pages slowly and notice the pictures and details. (And try reading the book again *after* you do the art to see what new things you notice!)
- 3) Get a stack of books from the library for the projects that will interest your kids. Plant the books strategically around the house. After you've hooked them with a book, say (oh-so-casually), “I think we could make art like this”
- 4) Plan a project ahead for a special occasion:
 - Leaf Art (page 85) is good for fall birthday parties, and Creature Collage (page 56) works year-round.
 - Animal Salads (page 83) will work with any group of kids who love to eat snacks.
 - Color Mix-Up (page 66) is really fun to do outside in the summer.
 - Partner Pictures (page 47) is great for child/adult pairs for Grandparents' Day at preschool or some bonding time on a rainy day.
- 5) Follow a “curriculum” (especially good for teachers and homeschoolers). Many of these projects are good for groups and will build skills across a school year. Follow the general order that the projects are laid out in and pick out the ones that seem most relevant.

SIMPLE SHAPE CHARACTERS

Like Mo Willems

When Mo Willems was a kid, he liked the *Peanuts* characters (Charlie Brown, Snoopy, and the gang) and P.D. Eastman's books (like *Go, Dog, Go*). Like Mo's best-known characters—Pigeon, Knuffle Bunny, Gerald, and Piggie—these characters show a range of emotions even though they are very simply drawn. Mo works hard to keep them simple; he wants four-year-olds to be able to replicate his characters and write their own stories to go along.

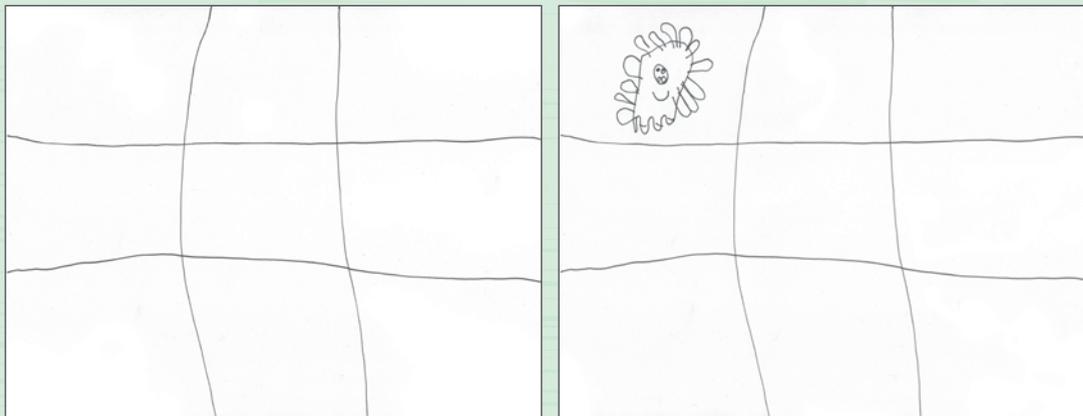
If you can draw shapes, you can draw anything. Test yourself by drawing all the shapes you know on a paper. Try a football, a bowling pin, a cloud, and a shape of your own invention.



Step One

Artists never get the best drawing on the first try, and they often make small, fast drawings called **thumbnail sketches** to brainstorm ideas. Divide a paper into nine boxes by drawing two vertical lines and two horizontal lines. (You can also photocopy the template on page 108.) Draw a character in the first box using shapes you know.

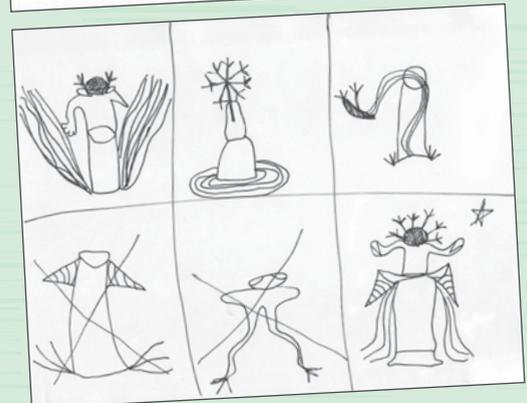
Do you recognize these characters? Can you draw the shapes they are made of?



“I believe the less that I put in the more the audience has to put in. Therefore, they have meaning, they have cowritten the book with me. I design my characters to be one step away from abstractions.”
—Mo Willems

Step Two

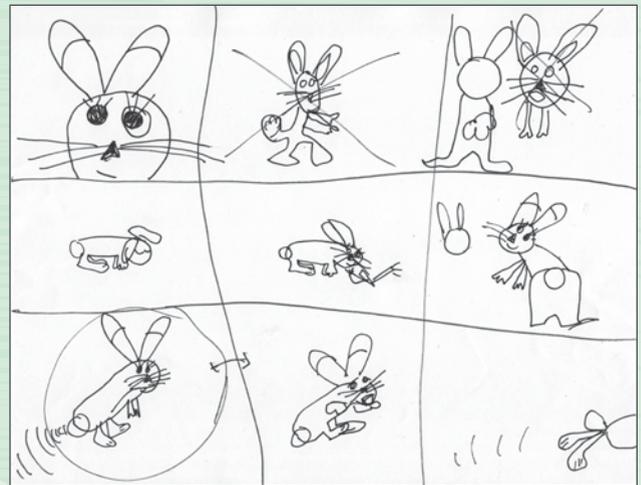
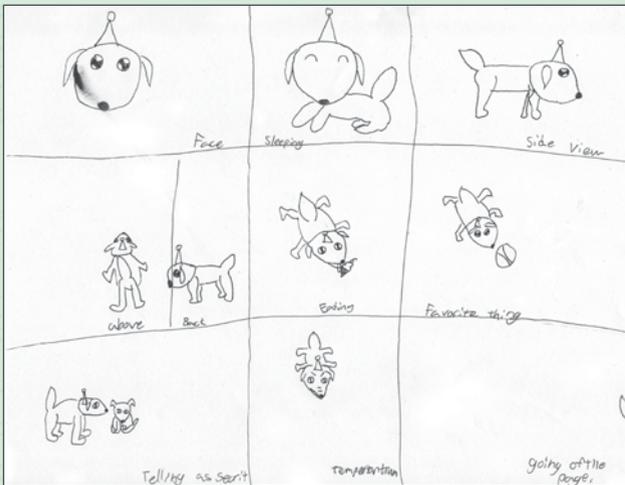
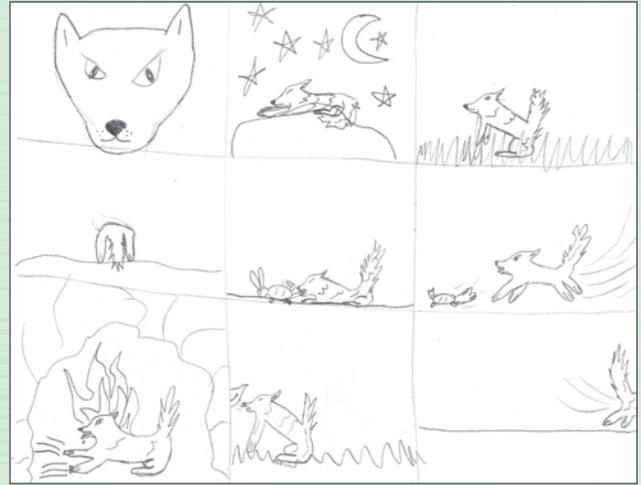
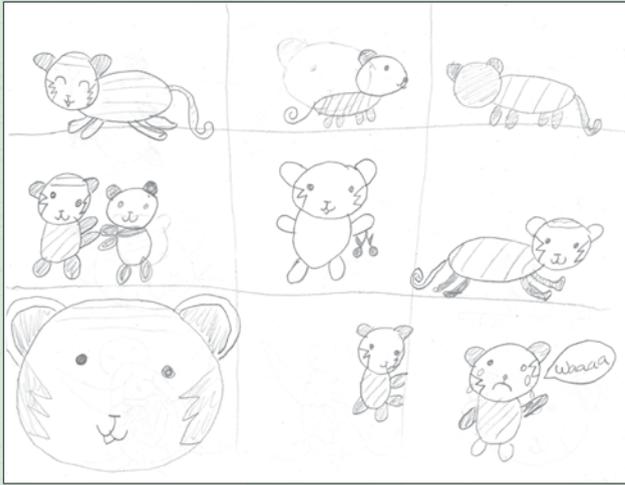
For your second box, decide: do you want to make that character better? OR do you want to invent a new character with new shapes? Follow the same process with the rest of your boxes—and don't waste time erasing; you can always cross out the boxes you don't like. Keep drawing thumbnail sketches until you make a character you really like.



Step Three

Time to make your character move! Divide another paper into nine boxes, and draw the following thumbnail sketches:

1. A close-up of character's face
2. Side view of character walking
3. Back view of character standing
4. Character sleeping
5. Character eating
6. Character telling a secret
7. Character throwing a temper tantrum
8. Character doing what he/she does best
9. Character running off the page





WANT TO KEEP GOING?

- You can make a bigger, more finished portrait of your character on a new page. Outline with a black marker and add color with markers, paints, or colored pencils. Now you have the cover page of your very own book!
- Think about the personality of your character by photocopying and filling in the Character Profile template from page 113.
- With a partner or a group, try drawing a “mystery” character. Each person adds a different shape until all of these body parts are made: head, body, arms, legs, eyes, nose, mouth, ears, and tail. What would you name your new character?
- Flip to Cast of Characters (page 30) or 3D Characters (page 93).

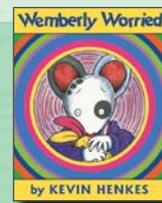
MORE BOOKS WITH SHAPE CHARACTERS:

- *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* (series), *Knuffle Bunny* (series), *Elephant and Piggy* (series)
- *Naked Molerat Gets Dressed* by Mo Willems
- *Up and Down, Lost and Found* by Oliver Jeffers
- *Little Pea* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and illustrated by Jen Corace
- *Spoon* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and illustrated by Scott Magoon
- *No, David!* (series) by David Shannon

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Like Kevin Henkes

Kevin Henkes didn't mean to start a family of mice, but now he's been drawing some of his characters for thirty years. He likes to use animals because they can be extra funny, but no matter what species, he believes the character is the most important part of a book. Lilly, Sheila Rae, and Wemberly all have distinct personalities and a signature outfit or accessory—but their basic shape and features are the same. You can draw variations of your favorite characters in the same way, and will soon have a cast big enough to populate many stories.



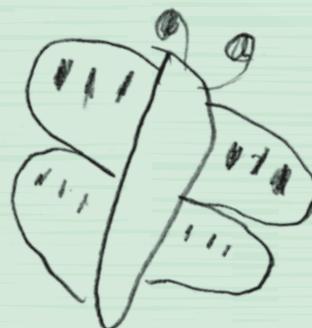
Step One

Instead of starting from scratch, think about the characters you naturally draw a lot, whether they are princesses, dinosaurs, trucks, or kids. You might even have a main character you've already invented (especially if you've done the Simple Shape Characters on page 18 project already.) Now, make a supporting cast! Here are some different ways to think of making a crew:

- A group of the same species. They may be animals, like Kevin Henke's mice or Oliver Dunrea's geese, or they may even be objects, like the crayons in Drew Daywalt's and Oliver Jefers's *The Day The Crayons Quit*.
- A family of misfits. These make interesting stories because they don't always get along. In the *Mother Bruce* books by Ryan T. Higgins, the family is made up of a bear, four geese, three mice, and assorted other forest animals.
- Kids in the same class. The characters in Andrea Beaty's and David Roberts *Iggy Peck, Architect*; *Ada Twist, Scientist*; and *Rosy Revere, Engineer* all repeat throughout the books.
- People who live on the same block or neighborhood. Like the characters in Rostraut Susanne Berner's *In The Town All Year 'Round* and Richard Scarry's books.
- Different members of a quest, like the set of characters from your favorite superhero comic or fairy tale. (Don't forget the villains!)

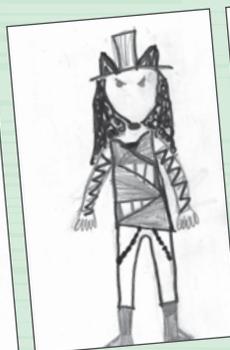
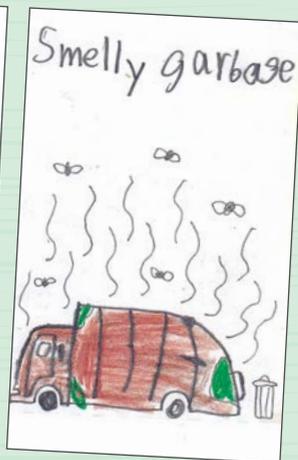
These are the traits Kevin Henkes admires most in his mice.

- Chester: reliable
- Chrysanthemum: sensitive
- Lilly: exuberant
- Owen: centered
- Sheila Rae: brave
- Wendell: clever
- Sophie: tenacious
- Wemberly: thoughtful



Step Two

Draw each character on a separate index card. (Don't have index cards? Fold a piece of paper in half two times and cut along the folds for instant cards!) Think about their signature outfit, accessory, or feature. (For example, Charlie Brown's striped shirt, Lilly's purple plastic purse in *Wemberly Worried*, and Eloise's messy hair in the *Eloise* series by Kay Thompson.) Like Kevin Henkes, you can start drawing in pencil, and then trace your characters in black marker or pen and color them in when you're happy with them.



Step Three

To learn more about your characters' personalities, flip the index cards over and write a short bio on the back. Include:

- Their name
- One word to describe their personality
- Their main problem in life
- Their main goal in life
- Special skills or talents
- Friends and foes (other members of your cast!)

| Name | Sibling | favrite food | friend |
|-------------|---------|-------------------------|--------|
| clara | pandy | ice cream | ruby |
| good at art | | goal go to human school | |

| Name | Sibling | favrite food | friend |
|----------------|---------|-------------------------|--------|
| pandy | clara | ice cream | stripy |
| good at Soccer | | goal get on Soccer team | |

| Name | Sibling | favrite food | friend |
|-----------------|---------|----------------|--------|
| ruby | Stripy | cheerys | clara |
| good at theater | | goal do a play | |

| Name | Sibling | favrite food | friend |
|---------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| Stripie | ruby | cheerys | pandy |
| great at cartwheels | | goal do a back bend | |



NOW WHAT?

Once you've finished index cards for at least five characters (and up to twenty), there are SO MANY things you can do with them. Here are just a few.

- Make stories! To put your characters together in interesting ways, shuffle them up and roll a dice. Deal out the number of characters you rolled. Based on their problems and goals, decide on a "situation" you could put these characters in and start writing or drawing out a story.
- Flip ahead to Trickster Pictures on page 34 and try to fool your friends.
- With a friend, draw a character from both your decks, and dream up an adventure they may take together. Write and draw it out.
- Make duplicates of your best characters and trade cards with your friends. Besides starting your own collection of art, you can "play" your cards against each other the same way you play the game Apples to Apples® by Mattel Games®. (You need a third person to act as the judge to call out words like "best climber" and "best dressed.")

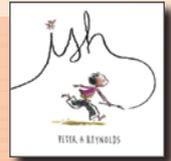
MORE BOOKS WITH CASTS OF CHARACTERS:

- *Ada Twist, Scientist; Iggy Peck, Architect; Rosie Revere, Engineer* by Andrea Beaty and David Roberts
- *Elephant and Piggie* (series) by Mo Willems
- *Gossie and Gertie* (series) by Olivier Dunrea
- *Mother Bruce* (series) by Ryan T. Higgins
- *The Day the Crayons Quit, The Day the Crayons Came Back* by Drew Daywalt and illustrated by Oliver Jeffers
- *In the Town All Year 'Round* by Rotraut Susanne Berner
- *Eloise* series by Kay Thompson and illustrated by Hilary Knight

PICTURE-ISH

Like Peter Reynolds

“If you are creative, you can see something that doesn’t exist,” Peter Reynolds says. And if you take that vision and blend it together with other people—and other artists—then creativity can solve some of the world’s big problems. Many of Peter’s books are about inspiration or the creative process. If you are not sure how or where to start with a picture, he recommends just *making a mark*: a dot or a scribble is perfect.



So many things are hard to draw (zebras, spaceships, ears) that most of us can make *ishy* pictures easily. But sometimes your brain gets in the way of your hands and tries to make the drawing look “right.” These three techniques will trick your brain into making art that is especially *Picture-ish*.

Step One

Find something to draw; *ish* pictures work best when looking at a single object. You are a good choice (just set up a small mirror on your table). A vase of flowers, a branch of leaves, or a stuffed animal will also work.

You will be making **contour drawings**, which is moving your pen around the paper as your eyes move around the object. (If you want to practice a quick contour drawing now, go ahead.)



Step Two

Once you have your drawing subject and all of your supplies gathered, try one, two, or all three types contour drawings as I’ve described here.

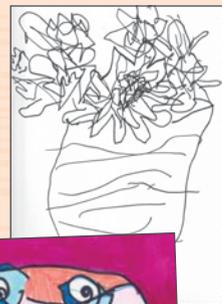
A. BLIND CONTOUR

Look at the object you are drawing but *don’t look* at your paper. If you are right-handed this means you’re going to turn to your left, so your hand and paper are slightly behind you where you cannot see. Place your marker on the paper, hold the paper still with your left hand, and draw. Draw slow enough that you see all the little details that make your object unique.

If you need to lift your hand and move to another section of the paper, *don’t look!* Use your best guess to “feel” where to go.

If you feel yourself run off the paper, *don’t look!* Just guide yourself back on.

Don’t look until you think you’ve drawn everything. Ta-Da! Del-ISH-ious!



Remember: *don’t look* at your paper until you’re done.



B. CONTINUOUS LINE

Look at your paper this time, but you *don't lift* your marker. Place your marker on the paper and draw.

If you need to move to another part of the drawing, *don't lift!* You will have to draw your line somehow to get there. (It is sort of like using an Etch A Sketch®.)

Before you finish, *don't lift!* And sign your name at the bottom of the paper.

Variation

Continuous line drawings are also fun to do with glue. Draw with the glue bottle and press colored string into the contour before the glue is dry. Or let the glue dry and paint the spaces in between the edges it makes.



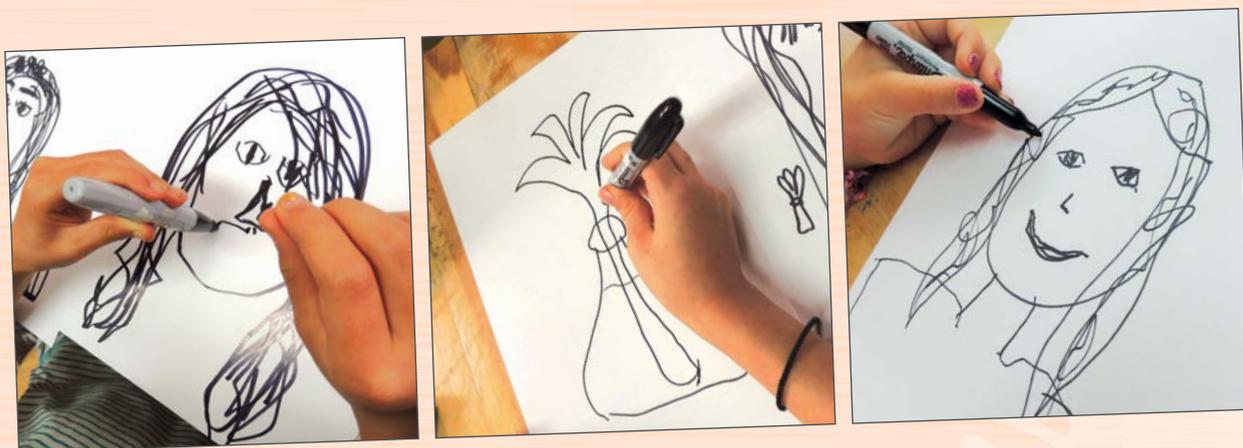
Continuous line drawings mean you have to find interesting ways to move to a new part of your drawing.

C. WRONG HAND

Look at your paper *and* pick your hand up this time, but *don't* use your *regular* hand. If you are ambidextrous (and use both hands equally well), you may need a bigger challenge. Tape or rubberband your marker to the top of your index finger to draw. Or you can always try your toes . . .

Step Three

To finish your *ish* pictures, color between the line with bright colors, and start your own picture-ish gallery.



Drawing with your other hand can be fun and difficult!



Ish drawings look messy, but that's okay.

WANT TO KEEP GOING?

Can you think of any other *ishy* variations to try? Peter Reynolds likes to create in messy, noisy places—like museums, cafés, and restaurants. Would your drawing change if you made it in the middle of a train station or on a bumpy bus? What about if you danced to music as you drew? Even if you draw the exact same thing, your *ish* drawings will turn out differently every time.



These blind contour self-portraits of me look very different, especially when I paint them in different color schemes.

MORE BOOKS THAT ARE PICTURE-ISH:

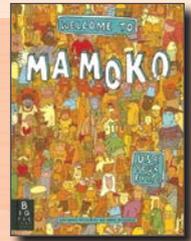
- *Ish, The Dot, and Sky Color* by Peter Reynolds
- *Art* by Patrick McDonnell
- *Scribble* by Deborah Freedman
- *I Don't Draw, I Color!* by Adam Lehrhaupt and illustrated by Felicity Sala
- *Lines That Wiggle* by Candace Whitman and illustrated by Steve Wilson

PARTNER PICTURES (THREE WAYS)

Like Aleksandra Mizielinska and Daniel Mizielinski

Artists Aleksandra “Ola” Mizielinska and Daniel Mizielinski start all their work by drawing on paper. Then they grow their characters and pictures into colorful and interactive scenes and storylines, like the Mamoko books. These partners make other complicated things too—like video games, fonts, and web designs. How do they do it *together*? It’s hard for them to explain, because they know each other so well—and have been working together so long—that they don’t really think about the process.

In this project, you will learn three ways to create pictures with a parent, friend, sibling, babysitter, or anyone else you like. (If you do these with someone you know really well, you might be able to anticipate what they will draw, and it will be like you’re reading each other’s minds.) You can also work in a group; instead of trading, pass your papers around in a circle.



A. Back-and-Forth Picture

STEP ONE

Sit close to each other with your paper in front of you, and choose four colors of markers or crayons that are different from your partner’s. Also choose who will keep time first (Partner A). If you want to draw in secret, prop a book up between you and your partner.

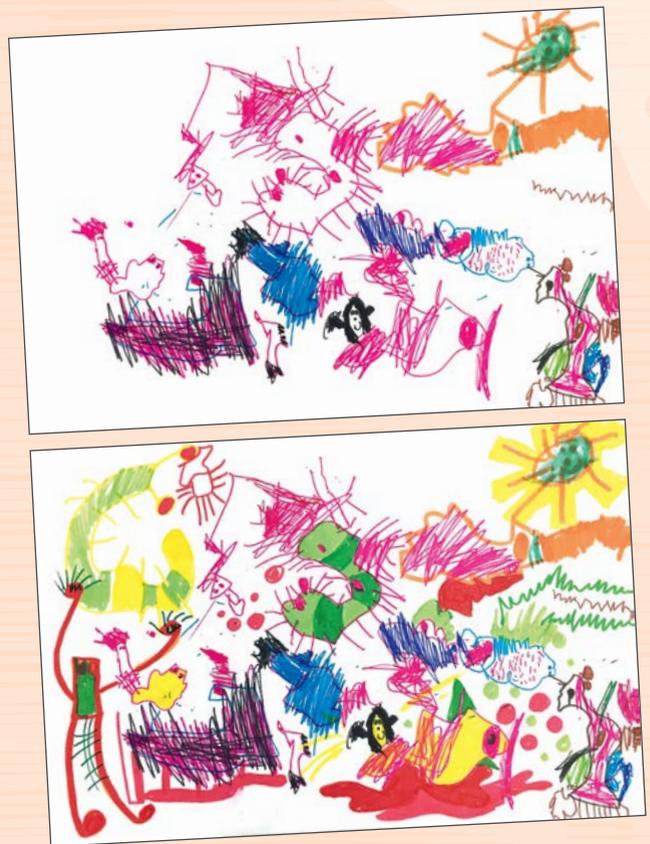
Start creating an **abstract drawing** with your four colors. This means you don’t have to know what you’re drawing—draw lines, shapes, and patterns or a scribble picture.

Partner A decides when they are ready to switch (generally after five minutes or so) and calls out, “Switch!”

STEP TWO

Trade drawings. Without talking to your partner, look at your new picture. Turn it in a new direction if you like. What do you see? What do you want to add? You can color in shapes your partner made, turn their drawings into animals and other things, or repeat their patterns and lines. The only thing you can’t do is cover up or cross out your partner’s work.

Start drawing! This time Partner B decides when they are ready to switch and calls out, “Switch!”



You will get some really interesting art when you share a drawing.

“In every book we have both text and images created by me and Ola.
It’s hard for me to define how exactly we do that because
it’s so seamless we don’t really think about it.”
—Daniel Mizielinski

STEP THREE

Switch back and forth at least one more time, so you get to work on each drawing twice. After that, keep switching until your pictures feel “finished.” Then ta-da! Look at your pictures together. Are they surprising? What were you thinking as you made them? Could you give each picture a title?

Artists Leo and Diane Dillon passed their pictures back and forth for more than fifty years. At first they used to fight about them, Diane says, but over time they learned there was a “third artist” working, and this was the artist that developed the work—not one or the other, but both! Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher have also been drawing together for more than thirty years. “Yes, we actually pass the canvas back and forth like a tennis ball in a tournament,” says Lou.



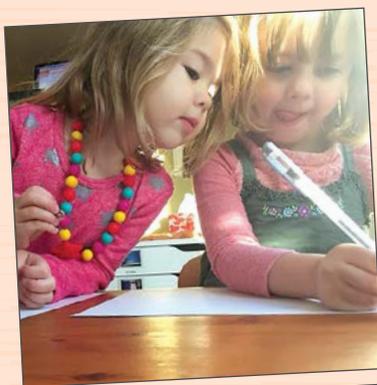
When you and your partner are finished, take a look at the drawing as a whole and give it a fun title.

B. Mirror Pictures

STEP ONE

For this version, sit next to each other at a table, each with your own sheet of paper, and place a box of markers or crayons where you can both reach. (You can use as many colors as you like now.) Decide with your partner if you want to make an abstract drawing—with lines, shape, and patterns, or if you want to draw about something. If so, choose a theme that you both like and are excited to draw, like a zoo, outer space, a park, a fairy tale, anything you think of!

To start, Partner A chooses a color and draws one object related to the theme anywhere on their paper. They can color their object in or just draw the outline. Then Partner A hands the marker to Partner B.





STEP TWO

Partner B, who has been *watching carefully* as the object is drawn, then draws the same object, in the same place, on their own paper.

Now it is Partner B's turn to choose a color, and draw another object onto their paper, while Partner A waits and watches. Then Partner B hands over the marker to Partner A.

“I can’t draw that.”

If your partner draws something really hard, just try your best to copy it. You might surprise yourself and make something you didn't know you could draw. (And your partner is *not allowed* to draw on your paper.) If it just seems too difficult and makes you feel frustrated, then it's your partner's job to make the drawing easier—perhaps by scribbling it out into a blob! Everybody can draw *that*.

STEP THREE

Take turns drawing until you've filled in the whole picture and you both decide it is done. Since everybody draws differently, your pictures won't look exactly like “mirror images.” But they should look very similar, as if they are very good friends. They might even want to hang on the wall together.

C. Customized Coloring Pages

STEP ONE

You can sit beside each other for this version or hide somewhere so that the drawings will be a surprise. This drawing is a gift for your partner, so think about them and the things they like. Your partner will need space to color, so try to draw things as *big* as you can on the paper. You can draw:

- A picture of them doing one of their favorite things (like playing soccer, cooking, or reading books).
- A picture of the two of you together, doing something you both love.
- A “portrait” of your partner, where all the features are drawings of things they like.



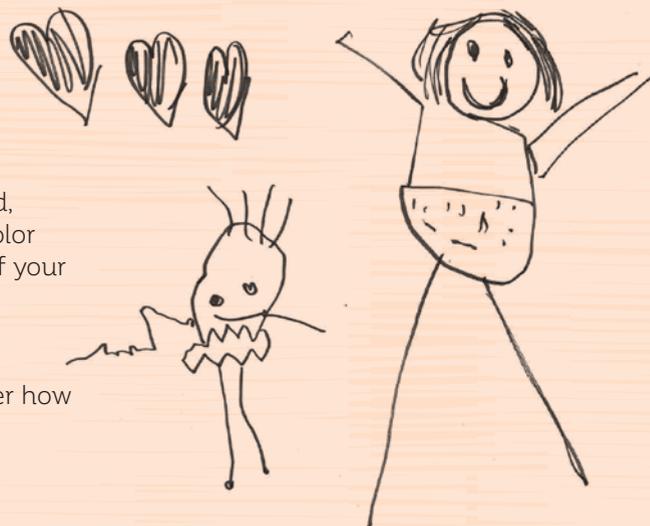
These were made by a mother-child pair.

STEP TWO

Before you trade pictures, check if there are any big blank sections on your paper. If so, add a background, frame, or pattern so your partner will have more to color in. You can also “hide” things in the picture and see if your partner notices.

STEP THREE

Ready, set, and . . . show your pictures! Tell each other how wonderful they are, and then color them in.



WANT TO KEEP GOING?

Make a whole coloring and activity book! These make great gifts for younger siblings, and are also fun to do with a group of friends, where everybody makes one or two pages. Besides coloring pages, you can draw:

- Mazes.
- Matching columns. Draw at least four pairs of things, or draw related items, like animals on the left, and things they eat on the right.
- Picture “starters.” You draw a character or scene and add a question or instruction underneath, such as, *What is this person doing? What is the weather like on this city? What does this boy have on his dinner plate?*
- Connect-the-dots.
- Hidden pictures. Super challenging for the drawer!

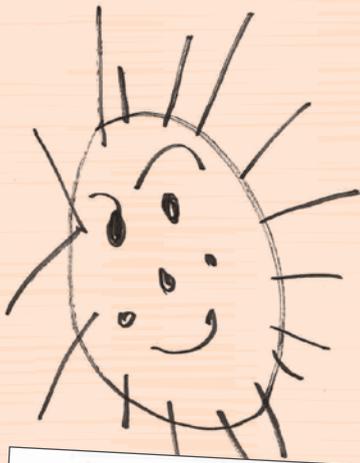
If you decide to copy and bind your coloring book, try to stick to these rules:

- Leave a margin around the edge of the paper that is half as big; copiers won’t go all the way to the edge.
- Use black markers or permanent markers for the original drawings. Pencils won’t copy well, so if you draw with pencil first, just trace over your lines with black marker.
- Copy onto 11x17 (279 x 432mm) cardstock so that markers and pens won’t bleed through.

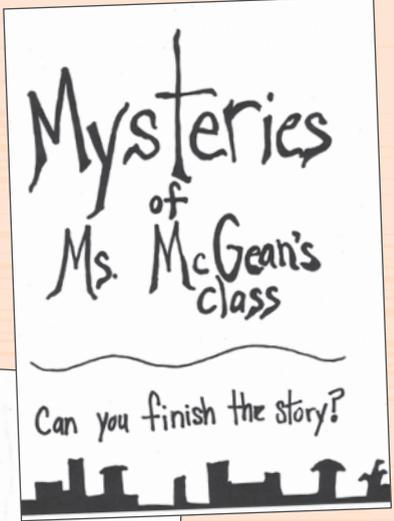
Partners Don and Audrey Wood split the work in their books in different ways. Sometimes Audrey draws the pictures and Don colors them in. Andrea Zimmerman and David Clemesha also split up the work like this: David does most of the drawing and Andrea does most of the painting.

For more ideas,
look at Taro Gomi's
books *Scribbles*,
Doodles, and more.





A customized coloring book makes a good class project if you make the drawings about something you're studying.



BETTER WITH MARKERS



***Want to make more Partner Art? Turn to Trickster Pictures (page 34), Not That, and Never-Ending Line (page 76).

LOOK UP BOOKS BY THESE ARTISTS:

- Aleksandra Mizielska and Daniel Mzielinski, www.hipopotamstudio.pl
- Steven Johnson and Lou Fancher, www.johnsonandfancher.com
- Andrea Zimmerman and David Clemenscah, www.andreaanddavid.com
- Don and Audrey Wood, www.audreywood.com

BOOKS THAT ENCOURAGE PARTNER WORK:

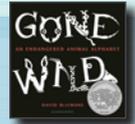
- *Scribbles, Doodles, and Playful Puzzles for Little Hands* by Taro Gomi
- *Sketchtravel* by Gérald Guerlais and Daisuke Tsutsumi and illustrated by various artists



ALPHA-TASTIC NAMES

Like David McLimans

David McLimans was a graphic artist and typographer, and an advocate for the environment. He made collages of endangered animals from old maps, and he made sculptures from found objects, trash, and wood. These passions come together in a different way in his books *Gone Wild* and *Gone Fishing*, when he transforms letters and numbers into endangered animals. Because they just suggest the animal (and because the black and white interaction is so interesting), these pictures are both simple and complicated, and invite you to look at them for a long time.



There are about one million alphabet books on the shelves, and many of them do strange and unusual things with letters. Try this variation with the letters of your name, and make a personalized banner for your bedroom door.

Supplies



Scissors



Glue



Black or colored construction paper, cut into fourths



4x6 (101 x 152mm) index cards (or white paper cut into fourths)

Step One

Choose black or colored rectangles for each letter of your name. Avoid using a pencil, and cut pieces off the rectangle to make your letter. For example, to make an “N,” you only have to cut out two triangles. What other letters can you make by just cutting rectangles and triangles out?

Round letters and those with spaces are a little harder. But most just require one extra cutout in the center. Poke a hole, fold your paper in half to cut the hole out, or just cut a line through your paper. Don't worry if your letters aren't perfect; you're going to cut and change them anyway!





To make the reverse images like David McLimans, cut the index cards and glue onto a black background.



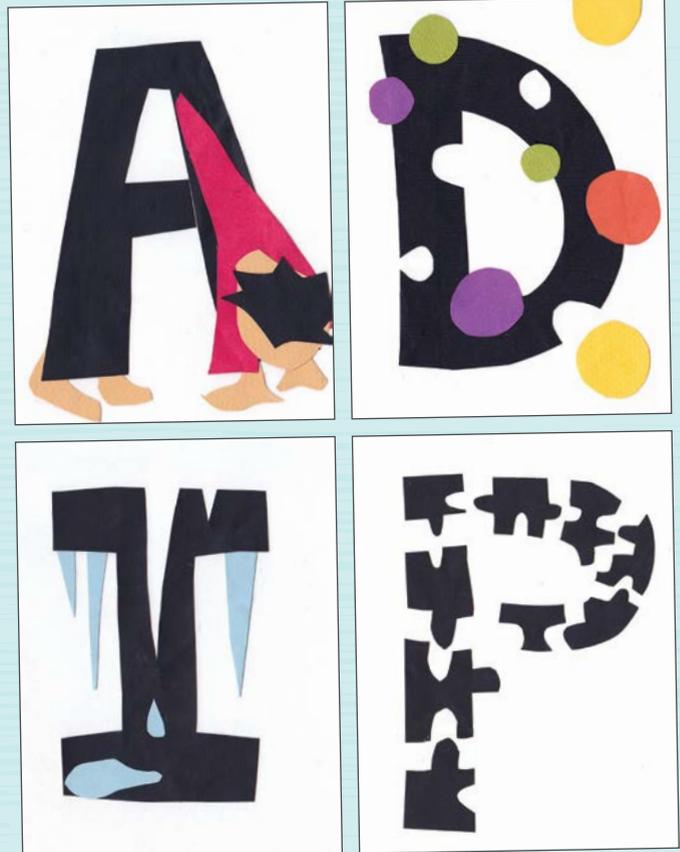
Step Two

Now for the fun part: transform each letter into an image or idea that starts with that letter. (If you want an extra challenge, try to stick to a theme, like animals or food.) You can:

- Cut pieces out of the letter—or even cut the whole thing apart. The white space between the paper is called the **negative space**; this is equally important to the main art in David McLimans's work.
- Cut and paste pieces of colored paper onto the letter, trying not to change the overall shape too much.
- Of course, you can do both.

After you have cut and arranged each letter to your satisfaction, paste them onto the center of your index cards.

A is for acrobat
D is for dots
I is for icicles
P is for puzzle



Step Three

After you've created all your letters, string them together into a banner, or tape them into an accordion book to set on a desk or shelf. Alpha-tastic!



To string horizontally, punch holes in top corners of your index cards and thread a string or ribbon through all.



To string vertically, punch a hole in the middle of the top and bottom and thread a string or ribbon through all. You may have to knot it under each card to keep them from sliding.



To make an accordion fold, simply tape the sides of your index cards together with clear tape—alternately, taping on the front side and backside each time.

WANT TO KEEP GOING?

Could you create the whole alphabet? An alphabet banner or book makes a great present for babies and toddlers—and will help you master cutting out block letters. You can also create celebratory banners like, “Happy Birthday!” and the like.

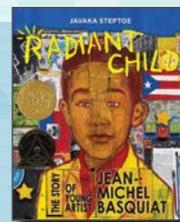
MORE BOOKS THAT PLAY WITH LETTERS:

- *Gone Wild: An Endangered Animal Alphabet* and *Gone Fishing: Ocean Life by the Numbers* by David McLiams
- *Alphabet City*, *Alphabet School*, and *A is for Art* by Stephen Johnson
- *The Turn-Around, Upside-Down Alphabet Book* by Lisa Campbell Ernst
- *The Hidden Alphabet* by Laura Vaccaro Seeger
- *The Graphic Alphabet* by David Pelletier
- *Cat Says Meow* (and other animalopoeia) by Michael Arndt
- *Alphabet Animals* and *Alphabatics* by Suse MacDonald
- *Alphabeasties and Other Amazing Types*, by Sharon Werner and Sarah Foss
- *If Rocks Could Sing: A Discovered Alphabet* by Leslie McGuirk

ART IN A BAG

Like Javaka Steptoe

Javaka Steptoe makes **mixed-media art**, which means he uses lots of different supplies to make his illustrations. Pastels and paint are joined by paper and found objects—fabric, ribbons, coins, seashells, buttons, and leaves. Still, with all the possibility of what to make, Javaka thinks it is important to give himself limits. One way to give yourself limits is with materials. In *Radiant Child*, the biography of artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, Javaka used wood pieces found in Basquiat's neighborhood, put them together like a puzzle, and painted and collaged on top of them.



Step One

Gathering supplies is the key first step because your art will be created from—and limited by—what you find. Working with a partner is even better because you can trade bags for a true surprise.

Grab a gift bag, lunch bag, grocery bag, or box. Like Javaka, you want to find non-art media that is fairly flat. Adding too much to a bag can be overwhelming; use only eight different materials at the most.



Colored and recycled items can be the first thing you put into the bag. Cut the papers into large shapes to make it more manageable.

DON'T
FORGET
NATURE!

“There is a part of my work that I don’t control—that I don’t even try to control. It happens how it happens and I deal with that. It helps me to stay curious because I am experimenting.”
 —Javaka Steptoe from SCBWI podcast



There’s always your STUFF box!

Grab a handful of supplies from the office or bathroom cabinets and dried food from the pantry. Include something bright and flat.

Step Two

Before you open your bag—can you find a surface that you’ve never used before for art? Also, what about some music to listen to? Basquiat and Javaka both listened to music when creating, and it works the same way that strange materials do—making your brain think “outside the box.”

Open up! Spread all your materials out, including the bag itself. The most important thing to Javaka’s creativity is *being excited*, so move your materials around in different combinations until an idea for a picture really excites you.



Add caption?

Step Three

If your things are different sizes and weights, you will have to figure out how to attach them. You might use Elmer's glue, tape, a glue gun, or even nails. If you need to add any last details, paint or permanent markers will work on top of most surfaces. Work on your art-in-a-bag until you feel happy with it, and remember, there are no rules for collage.

Stand back to see your mixed-media art from a distance. Did creating with it feel different? Was it frustrating or freeing? Do you want to make some more art in a bag?

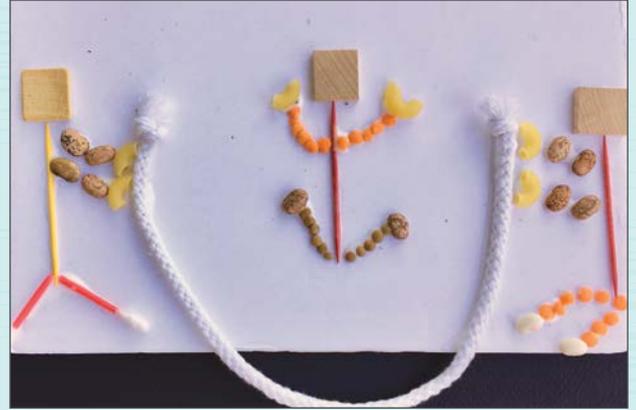


Variation

Go small by starting with a sandwich bag and choosing objects that fit inside. Collage on top of old postcards or index cards. Basquiat made these "art cards" as a young artist, then gave them away and sold them to introduce himself, and his ideas, to the world. Where could you put your art cards to surprise someone?

Group Variation

What would happen if you gave a big group the same "ingredients" in their bags? It would be interesting to see how different these turned out.



MORE BOOKS WITH MIXED-MEDIA COLLAGE:

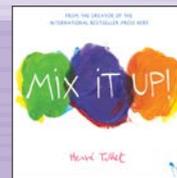
- *In Daddy's Arms I Am Tall* by Folami Abiade, Dinah Johnson, Carole Boston Weatherford, Dakari Hru, Michael Burgess, E. Ethelbert Miller, Lenard D. Moore, David Anderson, Angela Anderson, Sonia Sanchez, Davida Adedjouma, and illustrated/co-written by Javaka Steptoe
- *Radiant Child* and *Jones Family Express* by Javaka Steptoe
- *Hot Day on Abbot Avenue* by Karen English and illustrated by Javaka Steptoe
- *Wings* by Christopher Meyers
- *Uptown* by Bryan Collier
- *Freedom River* by Doreen Rappaport and illustrated by Bryan Collier
- *A River of Words* by Jen Bryant and illustrated by Melissa Sweet
- *All of Us, A Perfect Day*, and *The Little Yellow Leaf* by Carin Berger
- *Rain Fish* by Lois Ehlert
- *Life Doesn't Frighten Me at All* by Maya Angelou and illustrated by Jean-Michel Basquiat

COLOR MIX-UP

Like Hervé Tullet

It is obvious from Hervé Tullet's books that he loves to play. His books are made to be touched, shaken, shouted at, and otherwise manipulated by the reader. He often listens to music while he works, and the music guides what kinds of marks he makes. He also teaches workshops all around the world, encouraging kids and adults to experiment with paint. Like Hervé, all you need is the primary colors and a series of dots to start this project; your imagination will soon take over.

For these games, kids will follow instructions given by an adult emcee. They will dip into pots of color with a finger, brush, or other material, and mix the new colors on their paper, starting with dots. The goal isn't to make a "nice pictures" but to play, and the mixing pots and paper will both get messy.



Step One

Size this project to fit your space and your group. Choose between a large surface, like butcher-block paper that is taped to a wall or laid across the floor or a table. Or a single sheet of thicker paper or plastic cutting board/whiteboard (they are easily sprayed off when done). For each of these, decide if the kids will use paintbrushes, cotton buds, or other materials—and if they're allowed to use their hands.

You will need water-based paint in red, yellow, blue, and white, in small containers. (See "What's the Deal with Paint?" on pages 12–13 to compare kinds.) Some wet wipes, towels, or a bucket of soapy water nearby will make cleanup easier.

Tape larger sheets
of paper to the
wall or floor!



“I believe that collective energy and a great group dynamic is a result in itself. When we improvise as a group, we work from a place of freedom, where all mistakes are permissible and there’s no such thing as being over the top.”

—Hervé Tullet, *Art Workshops*

Step Two

There are no rules to Color Mix-Up, and the emcee can call out whatever kind of instructions they want. (Reading Hervé Tullet’s books will give you plenty of ideas!) Here are a few to get you started:

1. Make a big dot of blue.
2. Make a bigger dot of yellow.
3. Make the yellow dot shine onto the blue dot until you get a new color.
4. Make a red dot that bounces around like a bouncy ball.
5. Draw a circle around the bouncy ball to catch it.
6. Mix red, blue, and yellow. What color is *that*?
7. “Erase” one dot by putting lots of white on top
8. Draw a “road” across the whole paper, curving around your dots.
9. Draw another road that runs into all the dots. Ouch!
10. That’s enough instructions. You get the idea; keep going!



Use paintbrushes,
cotton swabs, or
your hands!

Step Three

Your goal is to fill up as much white space as you can *before* everything turns gray or brown. At some point, have everyone take a break and stand back from the picture to talk about it. Are all the colors of the rainbow shown? Would it be nice if there were more patterns or more circles or more shades? Can the kids think of some last instructions to finish up the picture?

Let your mix-up masterpiece dry. When you finish admiring it, cut it up into colored shapes and use them for collage in projects like Creature Collage (page 56) and Cities of Shapes (page 59).



If your paint gets super thick, flip another paper on top, rub, and peel off for a second surprise painting.



Color Mix-Up All Day Long

Create a large surface in your classroom or garage and make color mix-up an everyday occurrence. On a blank wall or fence, attach a large piece of clear acrylic or white clay board, and add a ledge below for paint cups, spray bottles, window squeegees, and brushes. Kids will make colorful art both while they create and while they clean it off.





No-Mess Variation

If you don't have time for the real mess—or if you're working with really young kids—this is a pretty fabulous way to mix the primaries too. Just squeeze the four colors of paint into a large zip-lock bag, tape all the edges down to a window or table, and let them play. (If you want a little more body to the paint, squirt in some shaving cream too.) Unless you use acrylics and can get the paint to dry out, these beauties won't keep.



Crayons Variation

Smash, grate, or shave old crayons up, and place the shavings between two plastic sheets. Overhead projector sheets (found at office supply stores) are the best, but wax paper also works. Layer the plastic sheets between sheets of newspaper (to protect your iron from escaping crayons.)

On a low setting, iron over the top of the newspaper for 20 to 30 seconds, opening up to check the melting process. When the colors have just started to blend, or when you like the looks, they are done! These make great suncatchers, but will melt and drip if you put them in a window that gets very direct sunlight.

These old CD spacers made excellent suncatchers. You can experiment with other kinds of plastic—just test it to make sure your iron doesn't melt and warp it (always with newspaper between).

Markers Variation

This is the easiest mix-up yet! Draw and scribble with water-based primary colored markers (like Crayola®) onto coffee filters, place them on a paper plate, spray or drip water onto the filter (not too much) and watch the colors blend magically. Can you find green, orange, and purple?



Before adding water.



After adding water.

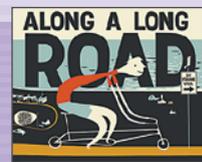
MORE BOOKS ABOUT COLOR MIXING:

- *Mix It Up, Press Here, Say Zoop, and Let's Play* by Herve Tullet
- *Mixed: A Colorful Story* by Arree Chung
- *Mouse Paint* by Ellen Stoll Walsh
- *Color Dance* by Ann Jonas
- *Little Blue and Little Yellow* by Leo Lionni
- *Blue, Green, and First the Egg* by Laura Vaccaro Seeger
- *Art Workshops for Children* by Hervé Tullet (for more excellent color games to play)

NEVER-ENDING LINE

Like Frank Viva

Along a Long Road shows a cyclist biking a yellow road. If you could unbind the book and lay it out flat, you would see one single 35' (10.7m)–long road. In fact, if you bent the ends of the picture around to touch each other, the road would keep going around and around, so that the cyclist would never get off! Frank Viva does love to bicycle, and his books often use simple colors, basic shapes, and a clever continuing thread—like the never-ending line. You can tell from his titles that he also likes to play with words and give himself new challenges when making his books.



Besides your marker, you will need a long, narrow strip of paper—as long as you have floor to put it on, maybe 6' to 8' (1.75 to 2.5m)? A roll of easel paper works well, or butcher-block paper cut down. Receipt rolls (used in cash registers) are also fun to use if you like to draw small.

Step One

Unroll your paper on a hard floor and weigh the ends down. Before you draw your never-ending line, draw at least ten obstacles all over your long paper: bushes and trees, animals, buildings, people, mountains, rivers, tunnels, and more. (You can also cut these out of paper or find 3D objects to set on the paper.)

Step Two

Take your time and draw your road with the thickest line you can make. It probably isn't straight. Think about drawing in:

- Hills and valleys
- Detours around your obstacles. (Bridges can be made with paper!)
- A tangled mess!
- Exits to get snacks and to rest
- Alternate routes
- Jagged curves

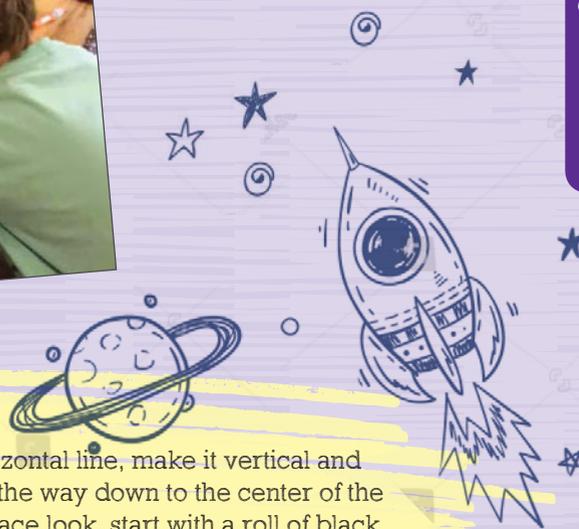
Once you add your road, you'll probably think of more things you want to draw or paste into the landscape, like road signs, attractions, construction areas, intersections, side trips, and more. Can you also draw something to show how fast to go to? (You'll find a snail and a jet in Frank's book that represent the different speeds.)





Step Three

Once you're satisfied with your road, "drive" it with your finger, a matchbox car, or a small character. As you travel, tell the story of what is happening and what you're seeing. When you get to the end—you can turn around and drive the road the other way to see if something new happens. Or flip your paper over and continue your road along the back so it is really never-ending. Find a friend and make up games with your road.



Variation

Instead of making a horizontal line, make it vertical and go from outer space all the way down to the center of the Earth! (For a realistic space look, start with a roll of black butcher paper and gel pens to decorate.) Follow the same steps, making obstacles like planets, stars, meteorites, satellites, aliens, ships, space stations, and more. Do you need to build a spaceship to travel this line?

To keep your never-ending road for the next time, roll it up with a rubber band, or turn into a book by accordion folding every 6" to 8" (15.25 to 20.3cm), and adding a title to the front cover.

MORE BOOKS WITH NEVER-ENDING LINES:

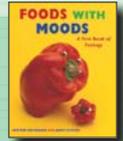
- *A Long Road and A Long Way Away* by Frank Viva
- *Hide and Snake and Just How Long Can a Long String Be?* by Keith Baker
- *Draw the Line* by Kathryn Otoshi
- *Lines* by Suzy Lee
- *Lines That Wiggle* by Candace Whitman

ANIMAL SALADS

Like Saxton Freymann

Saxton Freymann starts his illustrations by visiting the produce section, where he spends hours finding fruits and vegetables with the perfect expression. He looks at the shape of the food from all angles to determine what animals or people he will make that day. Often, he doesn't need to add much to bring out an emotion in his characters—perhaps a pair of eyes made of black-eyed peas or ears cut out with a craft knife. Saxton carves his creatures quickly as a photographer takes pictures of them. Later, he puts the photographs together into scenes on his computer, producing wonderful and surprising art. But does he eat the characters?

As you see from these books, you can use almost any fruit or vegetable imaginable to create art. Animal Salads art projects use your favorite raw foods and are instantly edible. They are perfect for a play date snack or a family dinner surprise.



Accessories

- Lettuce leaves
- Sprouts
- Celery sticks
- Carrots
- Snap peas
- Edamame
- Radishes
- Peppers
- Broccoli
- Jicama
- Baby cucumber
- Beets
- All berries
- Grapes
- Raisins
- All seeds
- Dried mango/apricot/other
- Shredded cheese
- String cheese
- Raisins
- Black-eyed peas

WASH YOUR HANDS AND PREPARE

● **A favorite fruit for your body.**

Fresh apples, peaches, pears, and cucumbers are delicious (you can also use canned halves). Wash your fruit, cut in half, and core. Leave the skin on, even for citrus fruits and bananas.

● **Parts and accessories.** You can use almost any food in your cupboard or refrigerator for building, and some of the best are listed above. Wash and cut foods into thin strips, wheels, and cubes.

● **A workspace.** A cutting board in the kitchen with a compost bin nearby is all one person needs. For a group, wash and cut ingredients ahead of time and arrange in small bowls.

● **Some tools.** Regular and plastic knives work, but pumpkin and clay-carving tools are even better. Toothpicks and chopsticks are also handy.



“The colors and forms are so wonderful that they give you everything you need. The characters come out of the vegetable or fruit. I’m just nudging it to something it resembles.”

—Saxton Freymann

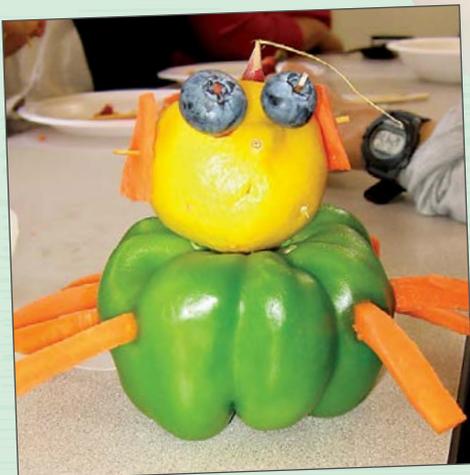
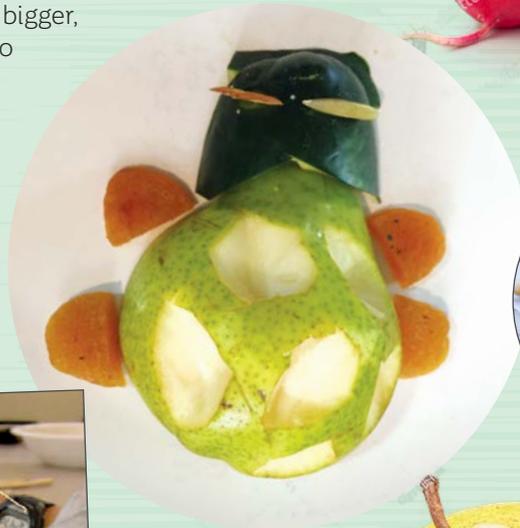
Step One

Make a “ground” for your salad by laying down lettuce, sprouts, shredded cheese, or carrots. Place your fruit body cut-side-down on top, making sure the bottom is flat. Rotate your plate so you look at the whole thing. What animal does it make you think of?

Step Two

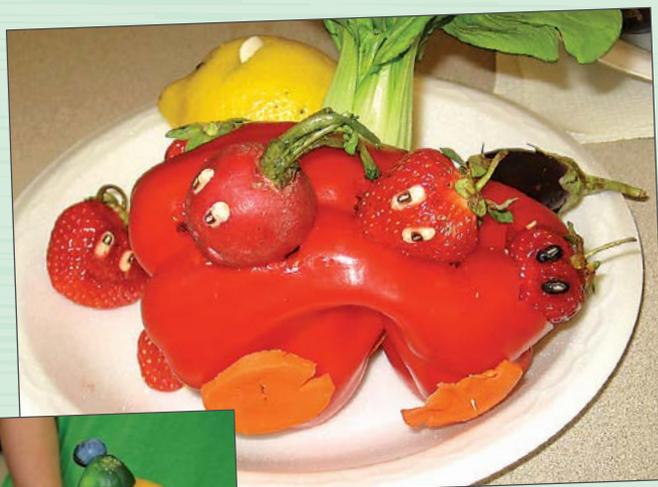
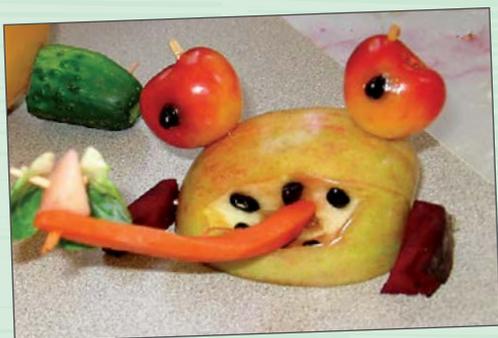
Add body parts to make your animal come alive. Drill small holes with a toothpick or chopstick to push arms and legs in (carrot, celery, and pepper strips work well). By creating a small divot, you can also push in nuts and raisins for eyes and noses. Toothpick pieces work as pegs to hold bigger, softer items together—just remember to remove them before you eat!

Also try cutting pieces out of the body. Use a serrated or plastic knife to cut small ear and tail flaps like Saxton does for his dogs. You can also cut a piece of fruit skin away completely and rub a raw beet over the cut to make a pink mouth!



Step Three

Inspect your creature to make sure it has all of its parts: arms, legs, nose, mouth, eyes, and ears. Does it need a tail or some hair? Would it like a hat or jewelry—or even a friend? Decorate the rest of your plate with sprinkled cheese, raisins, or nuts, and store in the refrigerator for up to an hour before eating. Don't forget to introduce your creatures to your family and friends before gobbling them up!



MORE BOOKS WITH FOOD ART:

Do you recognize all the foods in these books by Saxton Freymann and Joost Elffers?

- *How Are You Peeling?*
- *Food for Thought, Food Play*
- *Baby Food*
- *Fast Food, Dog Food, Food Play*
- *Gus and Button*
- *One Lonely Seahorse*
- *Dr. Pompo's Nose*
- *Play with Your Food*

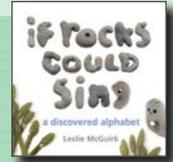


FORAGER ART

Like Leslie McGuirk

Have you ever found sticks that look like letters or rocks shaped like hearts? Leslie McGuirk makes illustrations from regular media like pens and paint, but for this book, she made pictures from rocks she found along the Florida seashore. It took her years to find the whole alphabet, and this book shows just part of her collection.

Because you can never predict what you will find in nature, you'll let nature decide what to make for this project. Choose a good place to forage. A beach, riverbed, or forest is great, but you can also find things at the playground or somebody's backyard. And you can do this in any season; snow can be used as an art material, too!



Step One

Bring a basket or bag with you and start foraging. Keep your eyes open and pick up things that interest you, aiming for ten objects of different shapes. These might include leaves, acorns, sticks, flowers, pinecones, rocks, feathers, shells, bark, and more.

Nature Hunt List

Starting with a list of objects is especially good for a group, and will challenge kids to look for more variety. Add to this sample list depending on the place and season. Find something:

- spiky or sharp
- round
- letter or number-shaped
- brightly colored
- rough textured
- smooth textured
- showing signs of an animal or insect
- that could house an animal or insect
- you don't know the name of
- that surprises you



Step Two

Find an out-of-the-way piece of ground where you can put together your forager art. (If you're creating your art on sand or dirt, sweep out an area and even draw a frame around it.) Spread out your foraged materials and see what they want to create.

There are no limits to what you can make; here are some things other kids have created:

- a name or another word
- a flat "portrait" of yourself
- a creature or person that stands up
- a miniature tower, fort, or fairy house



Make sure your materials are clean before building your creations inside.



Step Three

If you need more material to complete your art, go forage again! When your art is finished, take a photo and then leave it to surprise the animals and people in the neighborhood. If you walk by this spot frequently, you can watch your forager art as it is slowly reclaimed by nature. (You may even be surprised when other people add to it!)



Variation

Like the car game where you try to find all the alphabet's letters in road signs, this is a great project for family vacations or school field trips. Instead of finding already-printed letters, find letter-shapes in nature, objects, buildings, furniture, people posing, and take close-up photos of each letter. You can appoint a certain stretch of letters to each person or have a race to see who gets the whole alphabet first. Compare your photographs and even print them out to make an accordion-fold alphabet book.

MORE BOOKS WITH FORAGED AND FOUND ART:

- *Alphabet City, Alphabet School, and A is for Art* by Stephen Johnson
- *If Rocks Could Sing* by Leslie McGuirk
- *Rain Fish* by Lois Ehler

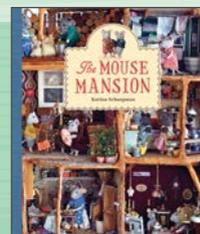
Look up these other artists who work from nature:

- Flora Forager, flowers
- Patrick Dougherty, stickworks
- Andy Goldsworthy, rocks
- Vik Muniz, garbage

MINIATURE WORLDS

Like Karina Schaapman

Karina Schaapman's *Mouse Mansion* is a real structure; you can visit it at Amsterdam's Central Library. It was built as a "set" for the mice Sam and Julia to discover in Karina's books. The finished mansion has more than a hundred rooms, stands almost 10' (3.05m) tall, and took four years to build. The reason the *Mouse Mansion* looks "higgledy-piggledy" is because it was built room by room. Whenever the structure started to tilt, Karina added more rooms of cardboard boxes on the other side to balance everything out. Then she added beams, doors, and windows before moving on to decoration. Much of the furniture and smaller details are made by Karina and her family from wood, clay, fabric, paper, and cardboard.



Supplies



Shoebbox or other small box, lid optional



Tacky glue and/or a hot glue gun (gummed paper tape also works well to join boxes together)



Scissors, plus a craft knife or box cutter

- Wall, floor, and furniture supplies.
- Your stuff box will come in very handy on this project, because there is no end to the recycled supplies you can use to make furniture and accessories.



Step One

Choose your box and decide which way it will sit. If you have a lid, it can be used in your house as a:

- **building addition.** Maybe a roof-top terrace or a patio?
- **dividing wall.** Fold a paper "tab" and glue it onto the wall and the floor. This works like an L-Bracket to make walls stronger.
- **"drawbridge" style door.** Cut the bottom edge of the lid and join it to the bottom of your box with tape. Then run a string through the front corners of your lid and back corners of your box, tying it at the back. Just pull the string to raise and lower your door and keep your miniature world a secret!



Keep your miniature world hidden!

Step Two

Building real houses requires floor plans, permits, and all sorts of planning. But the easiest way to start your miniature world is like Karina did: just dive in! You can always add and change as you go. At some point, you may decide to add doors and windows, which can be cut out completely or hinged on one side. (If you draw them where you want, an adult can cut them with a craft knife.) Also consider if you need stairs, slides, or ladders to connect different areas.



Step Three

You might decide to join your miniature world to a friend's, or find another box and keep building onto yours. When you are satisfied with the interior, think about decorating the outside with some different siding/roofing material.

Now, does your new world need someone to live in it? If you don't have a stuffed animal or toy that fits, flip to 3D Characters (page 93) and make a creature that's the perfect size.



“Starting with one room, you can build your miniature world as you go.”
—Karina Schaapman





Quick and Easy Furnishings

- Corks, spools, and tape dispenser “wheels” are excellent for chairs and tables.
- Wood scrap beds can be covered in fabric with cotton ball pillows.
- Altoid tins and small jewelry boxes make good refrigerators and bookshelves.
- Circular plastic lids can become sinks, bathtubs, and pools (and even hold water).
- Pebbles make a nice walkway or patio for your house (so do pennies, popsicle sticks, jewels, and more).
- Floor samples, found at home improvement stores are the perfect size, and almost always free.
- Contact paper (for drawer interiors) and adhesive book covers can be cut down and stuck directly to walls and floors.
- Natural materials can create a treehouse scene: mini-pinecones, small pebbles and rocks, driftwood, shells, and moss all work well.

MORE BOOKS WITH MINIATURE WORLDS:

- *Mouse Mansion* by Karina Schaapman — she has more but in other languages)
- *City Mouse, Country Mouse* by Maggie Rudy
- *The House that Mouse Built* by Maggie Rudy and Pam Abrams
- *Waiting for Goliath* and *The Visitor* by Antje Damm