Make a Mini Waterfall

It's a fact: kids love water. They love to play in it, swim in it, splash in it, run through it, drink it and spray it. Here's a fun activity in which your child can play with some water on a hot day and learn something while he's at it. Have him build his very own mini-waterfall! Your child will love the creativity involved with this project and he'll get to work on his planning, problem solving, and architectural and science skills as well. Not to mention, he'll get a chance to cool off and goof off with some water the next time the temperatures climb.

What You Need:

- Paper
- Pencil
- Recycled materials
- Scissors
- Rubber cement glue
- Water
- Plastic Basin (such as a Rubbermaid storage container - should be fairly shallow and wide)

What You Do:

1. Tell your child that he will be creating a mini-waterfall outside today. Have him search out recycled items and natural elements (like rocks, sticks, pine cones, etc.). Allow him to start planning his design by first using pencil and paper.
2. Once your child has an idea of what the structure will look like, allow him to start building his waterfall with the materials inside the plastic basin, making sure to build up, so that the water has somewhere to go. You might want to give him some tips like: *Make a strong foundation for the waterfall*. (Rocks in a pile work well for this.)
3. Help him think of materials that will allow the water to fall in interesting ways. Pine cones, tubes, straws, and plastic bottles cut in half vertically can make fun elements to add to the waterfall, in addition to giving this activity a "green" spin. The more you direct the water, the more interesting it will look.
4. Use the glue only when necessary. Too much gluing can make for a messy waterfall, and your child should try to get creative without using too much.
5. Pour water over your child's creation to see how the water flows and drips. Encourage your child to experiment with the water as he builds different parts of his waterfall so he can see how it flows. Explain to him that it's okay to make changes as you go along – this is called problem solving, and the best engineers use the same process.
6. When your child is done, have him show you his waterfall and encourage him to talk about the process of building it. Some questions you might ask are: *How did you decide on your materials? What changes did you make, if any? Did you learn anything while building the waterfall? What's your favorite part of the waterfall? Why?*
7. To exhibit your child's waterfall, you may want to position a hose above it and let a trickle of water flow down the waterfall into the basin. Only do this for a short period of time, as you don't want to waste water (you can use whatever water is in the basin afterward to water your house plants or the yard.)
8. If your child likes this activity, challenge him to make another mini-waterfall in a totally different way so he can compare and contrast his two models!

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