

Create a Traditional Japanese "Sempuyo"

Hand making books is a traditional Japanese art that has been passed down for hundreds of years. Encourage your child to explore this unique custom by helping her create a "sempuyo," a Japanese book with accordion-style pages. The word "sempuyo" literally means "flutter" or "butterfly," evoking the stunning effect the pages have when flipped. Your little one will improve her creative writing and fine motor skills as she creates a beautiful keepsake.

What You Need:

- Card stock, tag board, or high quality thick paper
- Colored paper or origami paper
- Pencil, pens, markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Ruler
- White glue
- Scissors
- Yarn



What to Do:

1. Measure and cut the card stock, tag board, or paper so that it measures 4 inches high by 18 inches wide. Use a longer strip of paper to create more pages.
2. Tell your child to fold the paper in half, so that each half measures 4 inches high by 9 inches wide. Have him fold the paper again, making sure that the ends stay even. To make the folded edges more pronounced, refold each segment around a metal ruler.
3. Slightly unfold the pages to check the layout. The folded paper should be oriented so that it forms a "W" shape along the edges, as opposed to an "M" shape. If your child has an "M" shape, just flip the whole page over to make a "W."
4. Have your child measure one of the folds so that he can make a cover and a back cover for the book. Alternately, he can use the folded book as a template.
5. Show your child how to draw or trace two rectangles the same size as one of the folds on origami or colored paper and cut them out for the covers. Use small dots of white glue along the edges to adhere the covers. For a tag board book, consider creating covers out of fabric swatches.
6. Allow the glue to dry. It is time for your child to author her creation! Encourage your child to write and illustrate a poem, haiku, simple story, or a comic strip to fill the pages.
7. Tie the book shut with a piece of yarn.

For added fun, show your child how she can create a book-within-a-book by writing and decorating the other sides of the accordion pages.

Blank accordion books make lovely gifts. You can decorate the covers with thematic paper or embellish them with stamps, stickers, glitter, and small beads.