

Create an Origami Puppet

Starting in preschool, teachers spend lots of time reading books aloud to kids, and kids usually love it. What many don't realize is that read-alouds are important not only for preschoolers but for all children, from the early grades of elementary school onward.

Read-alouds help keep reading exciting, as teachers talk like the characters or the class discusses the book. They also offer crucial practice in the core skills of listening and reading comprehension. How does this work exactly? In addition to helping kids sound out words and hear the rhythm of the language, teachers will urge them to understand what they're hearing or reading, and explain it back. Listening for story details and being able to retell the main events of a story are skills that take practice. To balance the fun with the learning that occurs when a youngster reads a book, it's helpful to find creative ways to get your child to talk about the books that he enjoys. And what better way to talk than with a puppet on your hand?



What You Need:

- White, 8" x 11" paper, enough for you and your child
- Your child's favorite story
- Markers
- Colored pencils

What You Do:

1. In advance, make your own origami puppet so that you are familiar with the steps and have a finished product to show your child.
2. Start with the paper oriented vertically. Fold the paper in half ("hamburger style"), and make a good crease. The right and left sides should now be 5.5" tall.
3. Make sure the paper is oriented so that the fold is at the top. Now fold the paper in half again (from side to side), and make a crease down the middle. Open the paper. Now you have a line going down the middle of your paper; this line will be referred to as "Crease A" in these directions.
4. Fold down the top left corner so that it touches Crease A. Crease the diagonal end you just created. Repeat for the top right corner.
5. Fold up the first layer of the front bottom flap. Crease. Flip the whole paper over. Repeat for the second flap. You should now have what looks like a paper hat.
6. Put your thumbs in the middle of the hat just behind Crease A. Grasp with your thumbs and index fingers and pull outward. Press to flatten by tucking the flaps so that one is under the other. Now you should have a square/diamond shape with open ends at the bottom.
7. From the open end, fold up the first layer of the bottom tip, so it touches the top point of the diamond. Crease well, and flip the entire shape over. Repeat. You should now have a triangle shape with a vertical line running from the open end at the top.
8. Like in Step 6, put your thumbs in the middle of the triangle just behind the middle line. Grasp with your thumbs and index fingers and pull outward. Press to flatten. Now you should have a smaller diamond shape with a split down the middle.
9. Fold the diamond along the split center and crease well, so you have a small triangle shape.
10. You should now have a puppet designed for little hands! The right angle of this triangle is the mouth end of the puppet. At the longest side of the triangle, you should have created a pocket on the top and a pocket on the bottom for your fingers and thumb to make the puppet's mouth open

and close.

11. Encourage your child to make his very own origami puppet. Ask him to listen very carefully to the directions, and to copy what you are doing with the paper folds. Explain that origami can be very tricky. Show him the finished product so he knows what the reward will be for good listening.
12. Walk him through each step carefully, modeling what to do and assisting as needed. Avoid doing the folds for him. He'll feel more satisfied in knowing that he did the work himself when the puppet is finished.
13. Let your child decorate the puppet. Use markers to draw on a face, adding details like hair, teeth, tongue, and lips.
14. After his puppet is finished, talk to the puppet! Cue your child into listening for story details by informing the puppet of the activity. Tell the puppet that you're going to read a story and that when you are done, the puppet is going to tell about what happened in the story. Read the story.
15. When you're done reading, have your child use his hand puppet to retell the story. Prompt if necessary to get a thorough retelling of the main story events including the characters in the story, the story problem, and its solution.

For more fun with hand puppets, have your child decorate puppets differently to represent favorite book characters!

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