

Make a Picasso Mask

Most people know the Spanish artist, Pablo Picasso, for his surreal and abstract paintings, but he also worked with clay. Much of his work was largely influenced by African artifacts, inspiring him to produce pottery, but also to create paint-and-paper masks on figures in his work.

Help your child get inspired by Picasso's inspiration! This project shows him how to create a Picasso-style, three-dimensional mask. He'll experiment just like the master, adding in vivid colors and wild patterns as he sees fit.



What You Need:

- Thin cardboard
- Masking tape or paper tape
- Colored tissue paper
- White glue
- Tempera paint
- Paint brushes
- Water cups
- Scissors or a box knife (with supervision)
- String
- Toilet paper

What You Do:

1. Before starting this project, share images of tribal masks from South America and Africa with your child, as well as other pottery work by Picasso.
2. Have your child draw an outline of his mask in pencil on the cardboard. Remember: it needs to be a bit larger than his face, as it will be slightly bent to appear three-dimensional.
3. Help or supervise him as he cuts out the mask shape.
4. Next, ask him to draw the outline for the eyes and mouth on the mask. Ask him if he wishes to create a mouth with a unique expression, or even one that includes teeth. What does he want the eyes to look like? They can be large or small, or shaped in any style that he wishes.
5. Then, have him cut a triangular piece of cardboard for the nose (either long or short, wide or thin). This also needs to be drawn larger because it will also be bent when it's attached to the mask.
6. Help him gently bend (not fold) the mask, so it's curved and appears to fit over a face. While holding it in position, have him observe the top area of the mask that will need support in order to stay in place. Together, determine the size of the cardboard that will need to be cut to keep the mask rounded.
7. Make sure to assist him as he draws and cuts the top mask shape from the cardboard.
8. Next, discuss the designs he's interested in creating on the mask, and help him carefully design and paint the mask. Allow it to dry.
9. Using white glue, have him add on any colored tissue paper that he wants to use to decorate the eyes, lips, or other patterns. He can glue down string or use toilet paper dipped in glue to help build up ridges, then cover the shapes with colored tissue paper for a more three-dimensional effect. Shapes may take a while to build up, but the effect looks amazing! Set aside to dry.
10. Now, have him place tape on the edge of the shape that he has cut out to help hold the top of the mask in a curved shape. Make sure he places plenty of tape on the holding piece, as well as the mask itself, to really keep it in a curved position.

11. Next, have him tape the inside of the nose piece and press it down onto the mask in a bent position. Have him reinforce the edges of the nose with plenty of tape, to make sure it stays on.
12. Using paint and tissue paper, ask him to cover the nose and the top of the mask, so that it blends in with the rest of the design.

Did You Know? Tribal masks from Africa and Latin America were often used to protect villages by scaring away bad spirits. This is why so many masks have wide eyes and show sharp teeth. They were also used during celebrations to invite good spirits into their festivities. Masks worn by warriors often depict spirit animals and symbols of strength, such as the stripes from a tiger.

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