Make Your Own Picket Puzzle

This activity shows you how to use inexpensive craft objects to create a unique puzzle of your own. Your child will come up with a design he wants to make into a puzzle, then he'll draw the design on craft sticks that have been lined up and taped together. When he's all finished, he'll take the tape off, and voila — his very own puzzle!

What You Need:

- 8 jumbo craft sticks or tongue depressors
- · Colored markers
- Masking tape
- Rubber bands
- 6" square of scratch paper
- Pencils

What You Do:

- 1. First, your child needs to come up with a picture he wants to turn into a puzzle! Invite him to create a design that fills an entire 6" square of paper (otherwise the completed puzzle may have blank pieces).
- 2. While he's doing that, get the puzzle materials ready. Align eight sticks in a row (like a picket fence). Secure the sticks with two 6" long pieces of tape placed crosswise about 1" from the top and bottom of the "fence." This taped side will form the back of the puzzle. Test your markers on an extra stick; most washable brands will work on wood.
- 3. Ask him to copy his design onto the wooden squares (the side without tape) using a pencil. He can then use markers to trace and color the artwork.
- 4. Have him flip over his puzzle to the backside. Help him number the top of each stick one to eight (from right to left).
- 5. Now ask him to remove the tape strips from the puzzle backs and shuffle his sticks so they're all mixed up.
- 6. Now he's ready to solve his puzzle! Can he remember where each stick is supposed to go? If he's having trouble, the numbers on the back can be used as reference.
- 7. When you're all done playing, tie the puzzle pieces up with a rubber band to make them easy to store. Don't forget to pull it out again next time you want a fun puzzle to play with!

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