

Make Sand Candles!

Summer time for many families almost always means trips (hopefully many, many of them) to the beach. The sun, the surf and the warm breezes make for a perfect summer time outing. The next time you plan a trip to the beach, you and your child can bring some of the fun home with you by making a sand candle. This is a fun and simple craft that ends up with some stunning results.



What You Need:

- Chunk of wax, approximately 1 pound (Note: large chunks of wax, along with wax dyes, are available at craft stores, or you can take the thrifty route and melt down your old candle stubs. Just be sure that you remove any charred areas or pieces of old wick before using.)
- Clean, empty tin can (24 ounce size works well)
- Old saucepan that you don't mind messing up (Note: wax is incredibly difficult to clean off completely)
- Bucket of damp sand at least 4" deep (you can work outdoors, or you can fill a pail and bring it indoors)
- Spray bottle of water
- Short votive wicks, with a metal clip on the bottom (available in craft stores)
- Optional: small seashells

What You Do:

1. Start by helping your child prepare a "mold." Have your child fill a bucket with some damp sand. He can use sand from the beach or he can use sand from a sandbox. Either way, you and your child will need to do this activity at home, as you will need the use of the stove top. But that doesn't mean that you have to do this project indoors. You can definitely do most of this activity with your child outside.
2. Have your child pat the top of the sand smooth and flat, and then dig a hole about 3" deep, in whatever shape he likes. This will be his candle mold.
3. Check the sides of the mold—they should be smooth and firm. If the sides begin to crumble, use a spray bottle filled with water to spray the sides so that they hold steady.
4. Have your child place the wick in the mold so that the metal piece is on the bottom with the wick standing straight up out of the mold, pointing toward the sky.
5. Melt your wax (this is definitely a step where the grown-ups can take the reins). Place it in a clean, empty tin can, and then place the can in a water bath in your old saucepan. Bring the water to a boil, and melt the wax until it is completely liquid.
6. Pour the wax into the sand mold your child has prepared. Fill the mold almost to the top, leaving at least an inch of the wick exposed. Note: try to leave a little bit of wax in the can, to use for later. As the candle cools, you'll notice that a "well" or depression in the wax forms near the wick. When that happens, melt some of the leftover wax, and pour just a little bit of it into the well to make the top surface even.
7. Depending on the weather, your candle will be hard enough to remove from the sand mold in about two hours (maybe sooner!). Help your child to gently lift it out, revealing the light coating of sand on the outside of the candle. He can place his homemade candle on the dinner table, or beside his bed. He can display his homemade candle anywhere, and he'll always be reminded of those fun summer days spent at the beach.

If your child really loves this activity, here are a few extras you can do to expand the project. First off, when your child is preparing the "mold," invite him to place some small seashells all around the sides - they'll become embedded in the hot wax once it has cooled, making for a extra special beachy touch. Also, when you melt the wax, consider melting more than one color and making layers in the candle. Your child can choose some of his favorite colors or colors that remind him of the beach. Just give each layer a few minutes to harden before you add the next one and get ready for some stunning results! You can also adapt this activity to certain holidays, like Fourth of July, by using red, white and blue wax, for a patriotic nautical theme.

© Copyright 2006-2012 Education.com All Rights Reserved.