

Make Your Own Watercolor Wrapping Paper

Visit any gift store and you can buy plenty of wrapping paper...but as Grandma will be the first to tell you, there's really nothing like homemade. Teachers appreciate it, too, because by experimenting with paint and crayons and other decorative tools, kids are also doing science, art and small-motor muscle building that all lead to success at school.

What You Need:

- Plastic tablecover
- Plain tissue paper (not too thin) or newsprint
- White crayon
- 2 or more squirt bottles of liquid watercolor (available at art and craft stores)



What You Do:

1. **Prep Your Place.** Let's be straight here: You'll be using watercolor, washable paint, but this activity is still MESSY. If you're working inside, you'll want to cover your table. Outside may work even better, especially if there's a clothesline handy for hanging your child's masterpiece!
2. **Set Up Supplies.** Start by spreading out a sheet of white tissue paper or newsprint. Both will work fine, but do be sure that the tissue paper is not too thin. One good "green" option: re-use packing paper from store purchases—it's often a perfect weight!
3. **Draw.** Invite your child to use her white crayon to draw decorations on the tissue paper. At holiday time, stars and circles work well; kids often enjoy making hearts and flowers, too. Whatever your kid chooses, encourage her to spread out and make the shapes fill the sheet.
4. **Paint!** Now for even more fun: Give your child two squirt bottles of liquid watercolor, each in different primary colors (blue and red, for example, or red and yellow). Invite your child to spray them alternately across the whole sheet. If you use blue, for example, some drops will stay that way; add red and some will stay red while others will blend into purple. And in between, the white crayon will resist paint and the child's shape illustrations will emerge. One caution: beware "puddles" of paint. Encourage your child to stop when the tissue has been covered. It's plenty absorbent, and overloading it will only weaken the tissue.
5. **Dry.** This wrapping paper is stunning once it's dried, but it does need a bit of time in dry air. I prefer clipping it onto an outdoor clothesline, but you can also drape it onto a flat screen, or hang it over a shower rail.

When you're done, you'll have a vibrant wrapping for your child's gifts...and you can look back to a happy, satisfying adventure in creating it, too!