



# Nature Play: Leaf (and Stone, and Stick) Patterns

## Making Leaf (and Stone and Sticks, etc.) Patterns with Children

Natural materials and loose parts combine to provide children (and adults) boundless opportunities to create patterns. Colors shapes and patterns all exist in nature and can be copied, modified and otherwise explored by children. These creative projects can improve fine more skills, design skills, thinking and planning skills, as well as creativity, artistic expression, and appreciation for the natural world.

Tips for adults include to be respectful of nature and fellow visitors: try not to damage plants or other natural features or build where someone can trip over it. Also, let the child explore and create on their own, don't feel that the art needs to be perfect. Feel free to make your own art!

**Motivating Questions:** Can they create an alphabet or number system? How high can they count? Can they write their name? Can they make pictures out of leaves? (ideas include a duck, a flower, a landscape, a family portrait) What about sculptures? What different textures or sizes or shapes or colors of leaves or stones or corks, etc. can they find?

**NOTE for Grownups:** it is fun to do these activities with your children but remember when they (not you) lead the activity they learn problem-solving skills and gain confidence.

**Materials:** Natural materials collected from your yard or a walk through your neighborhood (sticks, leaves, pinecones and other seed pods, tree bark, shells, etc.). A quiet place to build.

### Directions

1. Gather materials. This can be done by going on a nature walk and collecting items that you find. Alternatively, go to a place where there are lots of natural materials nearby, such as a beach, or leaf pile, or similar location. As you explore the area, look for color contrast, interesting shapes, patterns, etc.
2. Find a place to make your art. Often these works of art are temporary and are meant to last only for a few minutes, hours, or days at most. It is also possible to take things home or save them for a few days. A board with mud on it, for example, can be a good temporary, and natural, "canvas."
3. Start small and simple. Think about basic shapes or patterns. The alphabet can be a great place to start. But don't feel limited by the alphabet. What else do the children want to depict? Feel free to explore all ideas that come up, including the abstract one.

### Online resources for water painting with children

<https://artful-kids.com/blog/2011/05/04/land-art-in-the-spring/>

<https://www.homeschooling-ideas.com/nature-art-for-kids.html>

<http://www.artandeducationbythesea.co.uk/Through%20the%20senses%2017.htm>

<https://artfulparent.com/nature-art-for-kids/>

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## Leaf (and Stone and Sticks, etc.) Patterns Examples

