



Making art from plastic waste

Plastic and other waste materials you have around the home can make great materials for creating things, and for reflecting on the plastic waste we produce...

Finding materials

You don't have to go very far to find plastic waste, and other usable things like paper and cardboard. You might want to clean food containers. You can also check out your local scrapstore for some more unusual waste objects.

What materials do you need?

You can use pretty much anything you can find. Bottles, old bits of wire, bottle tops, cardboard boxes...

Organising your materials

Sorting materials – e.g. into different colours, or different objects (bottles, pipes, tubes etc.) – so you have a palette of materials to choose from can help to encourage creative ideas.

Creating a good workspace

You can make nature art pretty much anywhere. If you want to do messy things like paint and glue, you might need an outdoor space.

Making a gallery

A good way to finish off your nature-based artworks is to assemble a gallery, take some pictures and send them to friends. This also helps give a sense of achievement and recognition for children's work.

Things to discuss

When working with waste plastic, think about the huge amount of plastic that we use, and often throw away, on a daily basis. In particular, single-use plastic items (bottles etc.) will only be used once and they are either thrown away in the environment, end up in landfill, where they take hundreds of years to rot down, or be recycled.

How can we use less plastic? And re-use or recycle more? Are there people, or schools or businesses, that you know don't recycle plastic? Could you persuade them to?

Time to reflect and discuss

It can be very useful to spend time discussing the things you've made, where the materials have come from, and how you feel about what you've done. It's often these discussions that lead to a stronger connection with nature, and the resolve to do things to help it.

Looking for inspiration?

Lots of professional artists, have used waste materials to create art, particularly to make a message about pollution and consumption. If you'd like some examples, search the internet for 'plastic art' or artists like Veronika Richterova.

Do we need any extra equipment?

You might want some paper, paints and brushes, and maybe some glue or stickytape. A hot glue gun can be useful but not essential, and needs to be handled carefully. But you can also find ways to manage without these things – e.g. using bits of old string or wire and a hole-punch to stick things together.

And you can re-use other materials like empty cardboard boxes or the back of paper.

How does this help the environment?

You could make models that tell the story of plastic pollution, such as of animals that are endangered by it. Then you could share these models, and the stories behind them, with friends to raise awareness of plastic pollution and promote positive action.

It helps by avoiding the need to buy and use artificial paints, paper, plastics, glue, sticky tape etc., which may use energy and raw materials to produce and sell, and which are likely to end up in landfill.

It also helps build a stronger awareness between people and their waste. This can lead to people being more respectful of their environment, and doing more to look after it, and to minimise the waste they create.



Watch the film accompanying this resource at www.artsworld.org.uk/creative-climate-change



Plastic art gallery

Some ideas you could try out at home



Flowers from rolled plastic sheet



Flower made from bottles



Steam train



Jet plane



Birthday cake



Big Ben



T-shirt



Bug