Holiday activities for youngsters

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“Only those who have the patience to do simple things perfectly acquire the skill to do difficult things easily” (Schiller).

SCHOOL holidays, eagerly anticipated by children should be a time of joy for all. Mothers can not drop everything to entertain their children and bored children crying “what can I do?” and getting in her way often cause a mother to dread school holidays.

FOR MOTHERS
A happy child is a busy child—one who has things to do (apart from farm and household chores) which will occupy his hands and mind. As a child's span of concentration is much shorter than an adult's he needs activities which can be either completed in a short time or which can be worked on then left, in stages.

Here are a few handicraft ideas suitable for holidaying youngsters. Each can be worked for short periods, then left. It is not necessary to complete any one article at a single sitting. Each article deals with handling small things—aiming for dexterity with fingers and improving of fine muscle control.

Each article also includes some outdoor activity—collecting the windscreen glass, shells, gumnuts, and so on. If this outdoor activity leads to another it has still served its purpose in helping children to occupy themselves happily.

Supply children with the essentials for the article they have chosen, with an adequate working space (if possible one that is semi-permanent and does not have to be cleared away at night). Supply newspaper to protect the working surfaces, and then leave them to work out their own ideas.

FOR CHILDREN

A Windscreen Glass Doorstop
Things you will need:
A bottle.
Broken windscreen glass.
Glue (such as Tarzan's Grip, Quick-Grip or Aquadhere).
Paint and brush if liked.
Trimming—gumnuts, pinecones or plastic flower.

How to make:
1. Choose a bottle that has a nice shape, and looks nice against your door. Half fill it with sand or gravel so that it will be heavy enough to be a good doorstop. Try it by your door and if it topples over find a better bottle. Scrape and wash off any labels.
2. If the colour of the glass in the bottle is clear, or matches your room, it will not need painting. But if you want a special colour, paint it first.
3. Painting the bottle. Spread the newspaper then find a tin on which the bottle can stand (without falling over) while you paint near the bottom and while it dries. A quick drying lacquer or enamel paint is best. Water-mixed paints will not do.
Paint spreads easily over the smooth glass surface, so don't fill the paint brush too full. Start painting a little way down from the neck of the bottle, leaving a place where you can hold on to it, then when it is in position on the tin to dry, finish the little top bit. Allow a day to dry.

4. Preparing the windscreen glass. If it is dusty or was collected from the side of a road it will need washing. The easiest way to do this is to put a little at a time in a strainer, and shake in a basin of soapy water. Rinse then spread on newspaper to dry. (Be careful not to run your fingers through it as you may get little splinters of glass).

5. Sticking on the glass. The glue should be a fairly fast drying one. Smear a little over a patch of the bottle about an inch square. Put pieces of windscreen glass on the sticky patch, leaving spaces in between. (Make sure that it is the smooth outside surface of the glass, and not the cracked edges that you stick down).

Do not break the glass into single pieces—it is much quicker to stick on a piece that is cracked but not broken—press the group of pieces on to the bottle, and over the slightly curved surfaces they will separate and can then be pushed further apart.

Continue smearing the glue and placing the glass until the area you want to cover is filled in. (You may like to leave bands or stripes of plain surface, or you may like to have pieces very close together at the bottom of the bottle and thinning out as they get nearer the top). Allow to dry thoroughly.

6. Trimming. As the doorstop stands on the floor and is likely to be knocked, any trimming should be fairly sturdy. The easiest trim is to tie a piece of plastic ribbon in a bow around the neck of the bottle. You could tack the stems of a plastic flower and a leaf or two behind the ribbon (or you could tie them on with plastic string).

Another effective trim could be made with two or three small pine cones or gumnuts, wired or tied in a bunch and then tied to the bottle.

The plastic flower should match the colours in your room, while the gumnuts or pine cones can be either painted or varnished (or polished with shoe polish!).

If the bottle has been painted, the gumnuts could look very effective if they are painted the same colour then just the edges tipped with a little silver or gold paint.

If you can not make up your mind, ask mother's advice on the trimming and colours.
7. **Handle.** A handle is not really necessary, but if you would like it, it can be made from plastic tubing or plastic string or a loop of wire. The wire should be painted or wrapped with plastic ribbon. Use a 12 in. length of plastic tubing, and split for 1½ in. at each end. Use several strands of plastic string—twist or plait them if you like.

Hold the handle firmly in the neck of the bottle with a little glue on the cork, and push the cork in firmly. (Paint cork to match the bottle, or choose one with a white or coloured top).

**Eggshell Flower Vase**

**Things you will need:**
- Glass jar or old vase.
- Paint (enamel or lacquer is best).
- Dry eggshells.

This is a method of making an old cracked vase watertight, or of making a glass jar or tumbler into a flower vase.

**How to make:**

1. Collect the shells from half a dozen eggs (ask mother to save them when she is cooking) and dry them thoroughly (in the oven or on the back of a wood stove). Put the shells on several sheets of newspaper and crush them by rolling with a bottle. If you would like all pieces to be the same size, shake them through a strainer.

2. Spread newspaper, find a tin on which the vase can stand while drying, and paint the vase. Allow to dry a little.

3. Working over newspaper, sprinkle the crushed shells on the painted surface. (You may be able to pick it up by putting one hand inside the neck of the vase, but try not to touch the outside). Keep turning the vase and sprinkling with crushed eggshells till the surface is covered. Leave to dry overnight.

4. Vase can be used as it is (though if it is an old vase that leaks around the base it may need painting on the bottom surface too). If you like, the eggshell surface can be painted over again. Another nice idea is to varnish it. If the shells have been dried on the stove, some get browner than others, and the finished vase has a pretty speckled effect.

5. Clean sifted sand can be used instead of eggshells. It generally needs painting over again.

**Seashell Flowerpot**

**Things needed:**
- Ordinary earthenware or plastic plant pot.
- Glue.
- Seashells—clean and dry.
- Clear varnish.

This is a nice way of using the seashells instead of leaving them in a box where no one sees them.

1. Sort shells into shapes and sizes. See if you will have enough to cover the whole pot, or only for the rim around the top.
2. Arrange the shells on paper as you intend to arrange them on the pot. (Make a pattern of the pot—make a mark down the side from top to bottom, then roll the pot starting from this mark and drawing around top and bottom as the pot rolls until it reaches the mark again). If you have plenty of shells, you may decide to arrange them in a pattern—zig zag or wavy lines of different shells, or flower patterns, or just anyhow.

3. Squeeze a little glue on to the flat part of bigger shells, and press on to the pot; or if the shells are small, smear glue over a small section of the pot and stick shells on. Continue till the pot surface or the design you have decided on is covered. Allow to dry thoroughly.

4. A coat of clear varnish brings out the colour of the shells, but the glue must be dry as the varnish may loosen it if it is still wet.

5. If you have a little gold or silver paint, the pot looks most attractive if it is painted first, and allowed to dry for a day before sticking shells on. Or you could just touch up the top rim of the pot, before varnishing.

Macaroni Lamp Base

Things needed:
Nicely-shaped bottle.
Small, fancy macaroni.
Glue as before.
Paint.

How to make:
1. Choose a bottle that has a good shape and a flat base, so that it will not be easily knocked over. Half-fill with sand for extra weight, and cork firmly. (When finished, the cork can be removed and the lamp fittings with rubber stopper attached, can be put in its place).

2. Glue the pieces of macaroni on to bottle, keeping them fairly close together. Work in rows if you like, or leave a spiral or bands or stripes of plain surface, whichever you prefer. When finished, allow to dry thoroughly.

3. The pressure packs of paint which can be sprayed on are the easiest (but most expensive) way to paint this type of thing. If using a brush, use it fairly dry and paint gently so that the pieces are not dislodged. Avoid going back over work, as the paint could loosen the glue. Choose a colour that will tone in with your room colour.

4. An extra touch, if you have any gold or silver paint, is to paint just the tips of the jutting-out pieces of macaroni. Little touches of silver suit white or blue for a boy's room, while gold looks pretty on white, lemon or pink for a girl's room.

5. When mother has the time, ask her help in choosing or making a lamp shade which will match and be the right shape and in proportion for your lamp-base.

Mixing Ideas

From reading these handcraft ideas most boys and girls will find their minds have been thinking of other ideas. They could mix up the methods and put, say, macaroni on a doorstop, shells on a lamp base, and so on.

Pebbles, old beads, broken up dead matches, split peas, rice bubbles, wheat and oats, scraps of lace, crushed dry bracken fronds, small dry leaves, various seeds, seed pods, and so on, could all be used similarly. (Castor oil seeds, lupins and the seeds shaken from gumnuts, could look most effective).

Where windscreen glass is used, say on a flower pot, turn the pot upside down and put a line of paint or drops of different paints around the edge. The paint will dribble down in and around the glass to make interesting patterns. Lengths of scrap string or cotton thread can be placed, in wriggly patterns, then painted over, and so on.

Note to mothers.—We do not advocate the use of good foodstuffs in craftwork such as this. However, for weevily, stale, or otherwise unfit foods, it is a means of disposing of them, and keeping small hands occupied at the same time.
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