

Plastic Bag Creations

Reduce, reuse, recycle--right? But what about plastic bags? In this activity, learners will make an upcycled flexible material that they can use to create bags, masks, bracelets, wallets...anything they can imagine!

Recommended Age: 6+ years old

Time needed: 10 minutes to iron; 10-45 minutes to create

What You Need

- Plastic bags
 - Thin grocery bags
 - Bags that bread, bagels and similar items are packaged in
 - Bags that newspapers are delivered in
 - Do NOT use thick, heavy plastic shopping bags!
- An iron
- An ironing board, or towel to protect your work surface
- Parchment paper
- Crafting materials like: scissors, yarn, hole punches, stickers, permanent markers, velcro, glue, etc.
- A grown-up helper

What You Do

- Set the iron to a medium setting.
- Layer three grocery bags. If using bread or newspaper bags, use 2 of them side by side to equal one grocery bag. Keep in mind that the bag in the center won't really show, so if it's a cool color or has a neat design, put it on the top or bottom instead.
- Use your hands to press the bags flat, and center them on each other as best you can.
- Tear off a large sheet of parchment paper, and place it on top of your pile of bags.
- Iron on top of the parchment paper only. You may have to move it around so you can iron the entire area. **Do NOT** let the iron directly touch the plastic. Here are some safety tips:
 - When ironing, always keep the iron moving
 - If you need a break, set the iron upright. Don't leave it flat on the table!
 - Don't touch the metal surface of the iron! It's extremely hot.
- Iron out any bubbles.



- Flip the pile of bags over, and iron the other side, with the parchment paper on top.
- Keep checking your bags-you want them to melt together to form a stiffer, but still flexible, material. Your bags will also shrink during the ironing process.
- It's time to create! What can you make with your upcycled plastic? Some projects we've seen at Boston Children's Museum include: bracelets, hats, crowns, wallets, bags, masks, superhero chest plates, wall decorations, mittens, book covers, phone holders, pouches for beads or other small items...you get the idea!

Tips for Adults

- You may be nervous about letting your child iron, but with your close supervision, they will do great. Review the tips above, and remind your child to follow them.
- The plastic material can go through a sewing machine, or be hand-sewn with a sturdy needle, including embroidery needles.
- If your child wants to make a bag or attach a pocket, or create something like a mitten, you can iron 2 sheets of material together at the seam, but you must put a piece of parchment paper in between them where you don't want them to attach. Then just iron around the edges.
- If your child wants to decorate their creation with stickers or markers, iron a single piece of clear plastic on top of it.
- Scraps of plastic can also be used to decorate by cutting out words, or making shapes from colored plastic.



Learning and Skills Connection

- **Thinking creatively and imaginatively:** Envisioning possibilities, solutions, and forms of expression; having hunches; thinking outside the box; problem finding and solving
- **Developing craft:** Using tools, materials, and practices to engage in the STEAM disciplines
- **Envisioning:** Picturing in the mind's eye, imagining, spatial thinking, applying abstract thinking

Doing STEAM with Kids

STEAM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math. There are lots of ways you can explore these letters, apart or together. Ask your child to make predictions, describe what they see, and to imagine possibilities and solutions. Don't worry so much about the "right" answer. Developing curiosity, and problem-solving skills are important first steps to doing STEAM!

