

CRAFT

DRIP, SPLATTER, SPLASH: CORAL REEF CREATIONS

AGES

Children 6+ years

Twins

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Frequently called “rainforests of the sea,” coral reefs are some of the most diverse ecosystems in the world! They serve as a primary habitat, breeding area, and food source for all types of marine life. Show participants pictures or videos of coral reefs, then discuss what lives there. You might also show on a map where the biggest coral reef in the world, the Great Barrier Reef, is located. Choose from four different craft ideas inspired by the colors, shapes, and creatures of coral reefs. See Printables for an ocean floor coloring sheet. Suggested runtime: 45–60 min.



Image source: Shutterstock

FUN FACT:

Coral reefs get their signature shapes from tiny organisms called coral polyps. Polyps often live together in large colonies and protect themselves by building hard tubes, fans, and other shapes. Sea turtles, clownfish, sponges, and more live in coral reefs.

ADAPTATION:

For older children, talk about coral bleaching and why it is happening. Focus on what children can do to protect coral reefs.

ADAPTATION:

Teens or adults might enjoy the interactive documentary *Lost Cities* produced by CaracanLab and Ruth Gates: <http://lostcities.org/#/>

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MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

Craft #1: Grow Your Own Coral Reefs

Materials:

- Dolomite rocks, or dolomite powder and small pieces of sponge (try garden supply stores or Amazon)
- Household vinegar
- Small, clear containers



Image source: Shutterstock

Coral reefs are made out of calcium carbonate crystals (aragonite), and children can grow their own! Children place a dolomite rock (or a piece of sponge mounded with dolomite powder) in a small container, then cover the rock/sponge about three-quarters of the way with household vinegar. Keep the rocks in the library where they will not be disturbed for 5 days to 2 weeks, at which point they will be ready to remove or display.

Craft #2: Blow Painted Coral Reefs

Materials:

- Cardstock or watercolor paper
- Non-toxic, washable paint in glass jars or plastic cups
- Paper/reusable straws, or spray bottles, turkey basters, or pipettes
- Water
- Paper towels
- Making tape

TIP:

Make sure you leave the top part of the rock or sponge uncovered! Otherwise, the calcium carbonate cannot grow.

FUN FACT:

Like coral reefs, sea shells and pearls are also made of calcium carbonate.

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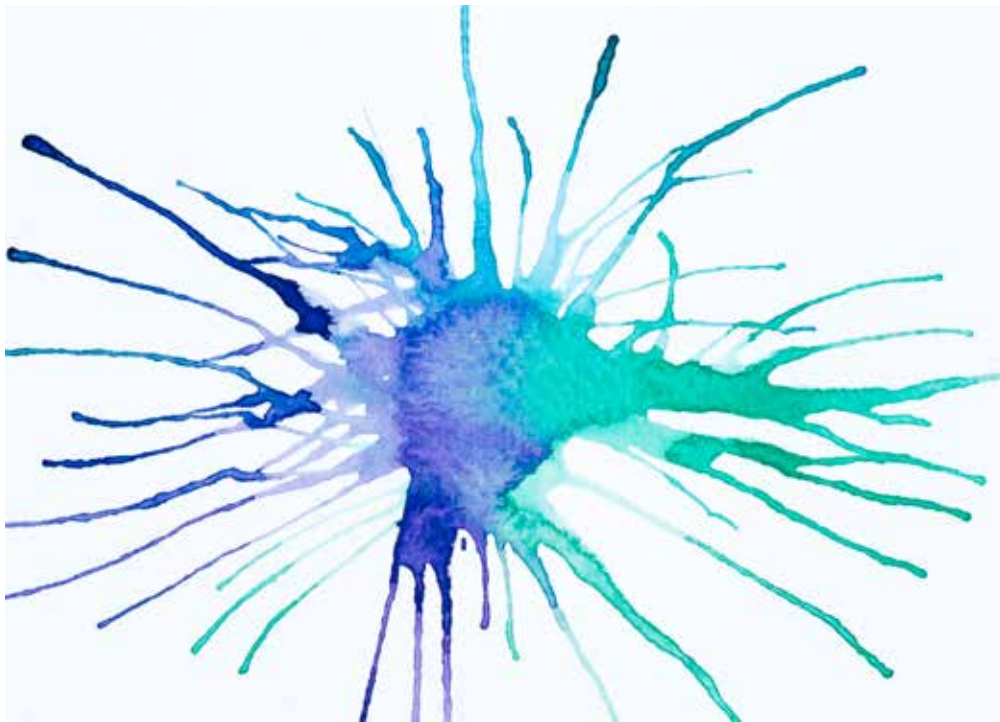


Image source: Shutterstock

To make:

- Dilute paints with a small amount of water. You want paint that is thin enough to go in and out of a straw easily.
- Fix the paper to the table with masking tape.
- Show children how to dip their straws into the diluted paint containers, with a finger over the top to add suction. They release the paint over their paper, then gently blow on the wet paint through the straw.
- Repeat with multiple colors. If using straws, each participant will need a separate straw for each color.
- Optionally, provide animal silhouettes and/or magazines for children to make collages on top of their dried paintings.

TIP:

Instead of straws, you can also use reusable turkey basters or pipettes. Children can also finger paint, or flick paint onto the paper with paint brushes Jackson Pollock-style.

CRAFT

Craft #3: Coral Reef Sculptures

Materials:

- 8–10” cardboard circle or a floral foam half sphere for each participant
- Glue
- Pipe cleaners
- Scissors
- Various recycled materials and craft supplies, such as paper tubes, paper egg cartons, coffee filters, seashells, burlap pieces, beads, colored moss, acrylic or tempera paint, glitter Mod Podge, scissors, paintbrush, beads, pom-poms, rocks, pipe cleaners, coffee filters, fusilli pasta, pool noodles, and any other textured materials (optional).

The simplest version of this craft is to provide floral foam and pipe cleaners precut into various sizes and lengths. Children roll and twist the pipe cleaners into various shapes, then glue them into the floral foam. Depending on budget and/or supplies on hand, consider expanding material options for more detailed and layered sculptures. A coating of glitter and Mod Podge, or seashells or rocks, makes a good base layer.



Source: Joelle Wake of Whiting Public Library, Whiting, IN

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Craft #4: Coral Reef Prints

Materials:

- Paint. Crayola Project Paint is recommended because it's a non-toxic washable tempera paint and comes in plenty of fun colors, such as neon.
- Wide paintbrushes
- Wood stylus, dull pencil, or pen
- Scratch foam paper or pieces of recycled Styrofoam
- Cardstock or other heavy paper

During the program:

Children sketch coral reef shapes (or a clownfish, sea turtle, or sea anemone). When they have one they like, they etch it into a piece of foam paper with a wood stylus. Remember that their design will be flipped or reversed when it's stamped. To stamp, cover the etching with a generous layer of paint, then stamp the design onto a piece of paper. Continue stamping and experimenting with multiple colors and sizes.



Image source: Shutterstock

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UNIQUE SPACE AND/OR PERSONNEL NEEDS

Single crafts are solo-librarian friendly; add volunteers if running multiple stations.

RESOURCES

Web

Get a free Coral Heroes comic from *Secore International*:

<https://bit.ly/3yGTef1>

Protecting coral reefs infographic from *National Ocean Service*:

<https://bit.ly/2SsWUtj>

Coral reef week from *Art Project Memphis*: <https://bit.ly/3wv9rey>

“How to Grow Aragonite Crystals” from *Tinker Lab*: <https://bit.ly/3chdS59>

Coral reef blow painting from *Wool! Jr*: <https://bit.ly/3yIOezH>

“Coral Reef Week!” from *The Art Project*: <https://bit.ly/3wv9rey>

Pipe cleaner coral reef craft from *Powerful Mothering*:

<https://bit.ly/2Su8x3c>

Books

Non-fiction

Looking Into the Ocean (2020) by Martha London (children's)

The Coral Kingdom (2018) by Laura Knowles and Jennie Webber (children's)

What Do You Find in a Coral Reef? (2016) by Megan Kopp (children's)

Dive In: Swim With Sea Creatures at Their Actual Size (2020) by Roxie Munro (children's)

Coral Reefs: Cities of the Ocean (2016) by Maris Wicks (children's)

Fiction

The Mystery at the Coral Reef (2015) by Harper Paris and Marco Calo (children's)

One White Dolphin (2013) by Gill Lewis and Raquel Aparicio (children's)

Professor Astro Cat's Deep Sea Voyage (2020) by Dominic Walliman and Ben Newman (children's)

Printables

Coral Reef/Ocean Floor Coloring Sheet

