

Simple Printmaking Activities:

These activities are designed to help students learn the basics of the four main types of printmaking: relief, intaglio, stencil, and planography.

Relief Printmaking:

Relief means “from the raised surface.” In relief printmaking, “ink” is placed on the raised surface of the object or block to be printed. The object is then pressed onto a piece of paper, transferring the image to the paper. The printed image will be reversed left to right.

Activity #1. For children Kindergarten through grade 1.

Begin by taking a “field trip” around the schoolyard with the class. Pick up as many textured objects as possible. Make sure the children don’t pick up sharp objects like broken glass or needles. Leaves, grass, twigs, pinecones, stones, bits of cinder or cement blocks or bricks, castoff wrappers and corrugated cardboard, etc. are great for this project. (Avoid cigarette butts and similar detritus.) [These objects will become **stamps** for stamp printing...a form of relief printing.]

Back in the classroom, place all the found objects in a pile. Add things like paper clips and rubber bands from the classroom (use your imagination). It is a good idea to clean or wash the objects before using them.

Give each child a piece of white sulfate, manila, or other absorbent **paper**. Let them choose objects from the pile to **ink** or paint. Don’t get too much paint on the surface or it will not reveal the texture when the object is stamped on the paper. While the ink or paint is still wet have the children **press** the inked side of the object on to the paper. Having a few sheets of newspaper under the printing paper will help get a good image transfer. The children may make “designs” or try to arrange the objects to lake something like a person, a car, and so on. Kindergartners will most likely make non-objective “designs,” While first-graders may need suggestions as to what they can make.

Teachers should try out the activity and create some prints of their own before having the kids do it. They may also need to demonstrate inking and stamping the objects on the paper.

When the prints are finished set them aside to dry. When dry, have the children sign the prints at the “bottom” of the print and display them for all to see. These are **signed original prints**.

This project results in **monoprints**, where only one copy is made.

Note: Bold face terms are printmaking vocabulary.