

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. Printed image will be reversed left to right.

Activity #1. For children in grades 2-3.

Begin by taking a “field trip” around the schoolyard with the class. Pick up as many **low relief** textured objects as possible. Have the children and other teachers bring in **low relief** things from home too. 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.) 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 tag board, railroad board or card stock. 8.5” X 11” card stock is cheap and works well. Have the children create a picture of something (landscape, people, etc.) by gluing the **low relief** objects onto the card stock. Have them fill up the whole card stock backing. This will form the **printing block**. When the glue is dry, seal the block with acrylic medium or polyurethane varnish (a thin coat works best). If you are going to spray them you may want to wait until the children are gone.

Give each child a piece of white sulfate drawing paper, manila paper, or other absorbent **paper**. Let the children paint the surface of the block or roll water-based relief **ink** over it. While the ink or paint is still wet have the children place a piece of the printing paper over the **inked block**. Rub the back of the printing paper with a wooden spoon or a **baren** to **transfer** the image to the **paper**. Repeat the inking and printing process 4 or 5 more times to create a short **edition**.

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 the blocks.

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 an **edition**, where more than one copy is made.
Note: Bold face terms are printmaking vocabulary.