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## Preschool Themes Newsletter – February 2020

Hello Everyone,

Welcome back to school and the first newsletter of 2020. I wish you all an amazing year and if you are starting your first year of teaching or changing age groups or schools all the best. The start of the year for me has two aspects; everything is nice and clean and a fresh start which I love but there is so much to prepare and set up that one can feel somewhat overwhelmed. I also try and assess what worked well the previous year and what needs some improvements. It's also a challenging time getting to know the children in your group and their families and dealing with children who take a bit longer to settle in. While this may stress you, think back to a situation where you were a newbie and how anxious you felt. What would have or did make the situation easier. I also personally found that if you have a few activities set out on arrival that don't need much teacher input it helps distract the child and gives the parents an opportunity to settle the child at an activity and to leave without too many tears. Examples might be special koki pens and drawing, playdough, some cutting activity, simple puzzles and a construction area such as Lego or blocks. Cellotape is always a winner too. Small cars are a hit with the boys. It's very distressing for parents, yourself and the other children when saying farewell to a parent and the child has a huge melt down so do your best to prevent this situation if you can. Some children settle quickly and easily while others need much more time. Be patient.

February is the month of love so enjoy the creative activities in the extra attachment. There are many more ideas on my Valentines – school board. Share some love too.

<https://www.pinterest.nz/kstedall/valentines-school/>



## Preschool themes manuals [www.preschoolthemes.co.za](http://www.preschoolthemes.co.za)

I received this very positive feedback on using the preschool themes which I thought I would share with you. I receive many positive comments regularly but this one really stood out to show the value of using the preschool themes in your planning and preparation.

Hi Karin

I hope you are well. I just want to give you a compliment - it is now a year that my three Pre-schools are using your preschool themes and after evaluation today, all the staff members decided that was the best investment ever.

Please keep up the good work and newsletters.

Kind Regards

Amanda (Splendid Kids Campus)



Does your planning and preparation take up a lot of your time? Do you get stuck for ideas or just need some new inspiration. Then preschool themes are perfect for you. There are 44 theme titles to choose from with each theme manual containing a week of lessons and activities. Depending on the age of the children and your specific setting, the themes can be extended over two weeks.

Each theme manual costs R50 excluding postage/delivery. You can order any amount of books. If you choose to order 40 books or more the courier delivery fee is free and you receive your books in a plastic container to store them. (South Africa only) The titles and more information with an on line order form can be found at [www.preschoolthemes.co.za](http://www.preschoolthemes.co.za)

The order goes directly to Groep 7 in Pretoria. A proforma invoice is sent out in response to the order and once payment is received the books are dispatched within a few days. We prefer to courier the books as the postal system is unreliable.

**To date over 98,000 theme manuals have been sold to schools and training organisations of a variety of settings**

# Creative activities

## Setting up your art area

It pays to take some time and thought to setting up the creative area and setting your expectations for the area.

It is much easier for children to respect and care for the materials when everything has a place. It is also useful to take the time to show the children how you expect the area to be cared for and how to use the materials in a safe way e.g. scissors, return the lids to the marking pens. Often teachers expect the children to "just know" this information. I am also very strict with children who waste materials or use them in such a way that they cannot be used again e.g. mixing all the paint colours together which makes a muddy mess or smearing paint on their hands or body.



**Always buy the best quality art materials that you can afford. Rather have fewer but better quality material. Not all the art materials need to be purchased at the beginning of the year. Don't forget to buy left handed scissors for your left handed children. Training scissors are very useful to help children learn cutting skills**



## Tips and hints for the creative area

- Don't put out too many materials – it overwhelms the children
- Make sure the working surface is cleanable or cover it so it's protected. It's perfectly acceptable to use newspaper or cut open black bags to cover them
- I dislike excess refining of the area e.g. All the red crayons in one container. It makes tidying up very time consuming and detracts from the creative process. BUT I do like all the pencil crayons in one tin or container and all the wax crayons together etc
- Pencil crayons should be sharpened. Most preschool children don't manage to sharpen pencils themselves
- CHEAP pencil crayons break all the time and don't sharpen easily
- Check the area weekly and discard crayons that are too small and throw away marking pens that are dry
- When setting out glue pots rather put less glue in and top up as you should never return used glue to the main glue container. It is contaminated and will cause your big container of glue to go off
- I am also careful with how much paint I put into paint pots as there are times a child will put the wrong brush into a pot and discolour the paint
- Put a squirt of dishwashing liquid into the paint. It helps with clean up
- Always put water into the paint and glue pots while waiting for a chance to wash them. Same for the paint brushes. It's much quicker to wash them if they have been soaked
- ALWAYS stand your paint brushes with the bristle upwards while drying. If left wet in a container with the bristles down they dry misshapen and can't be restore
- I prefer to use the short black bristle brushes for glue as glue can damage the paint brushes
- If your brushes end up with glue hardened on them place them in some boiling water. This will soften the glue so it can be removed
- Label your art storage containers so you can easily locate what you need and return materials easily
- Try your best to put everything away at the end of each day and at least at the end of each week. It's so easy to just put stuff down in the busyness of the school day and before long its chaos.



## Join the dots using squiggly lines

**Themes:** Colours, Worms (garden visitors), Hands

**Ages:** 4 - 5 year olds

**Skills:** Small and large muscles, eye hand co-ordination

### Materials:

- A 4 paper
- Koki pens or wax crayons



**Method: Teacher:** Prepare the papers by drawing matching coloured dots near to each other. Use a variety of colours.

**Child:**

The child selects a matching colour to one of the dots and starting at one dot draws a squiggly line to the next nearest coloured dot of the same colour. The activity is repeated until all the dots have been joined.

The same activity can be repeated but using straight lines which is more challenging.

**Notes:**

- Some children struggled to keep a consistent squiggle but that's not an issue
- Some children did not match the colours especially the younger children
- Keep your dots quite close as it's tricky for the young child to find the other dot if it's too far away

**Valentine's Day heart hats**

**Themes:** Colour red, Valentine's Day, Shapes – heart, Hats

**Ages:** 3 ½ - 5 year olds

**Skills:** Small and large muscles, eye hand co-ordination

**Materials:**

- Paper plate – small or large depending on the age of the child.
- Scissors – Teacher
- Red and white paint
- Paint brushes
- Optional: Paper hearts made from a scrap booking punch

Template: <https://i.pinimg.com/236x/c6/52/9a/c6529ae09093a812e58f5bf157a78dc9.jpg>



**Teacher:** Cut heart shapes from the centre of the paper plate. To do this fold the paper plate in half and carefully cut the inner circle leaving a small area still attached to the main plate. Cut the circle to be a heart shape. Punch small hearts if using.

**Child:** The child drops blobs of red and white paint onto one side of the heart. The child folds the heart closed and rubs gently on the outside so the paint colours merge to make pink. The child opens the heart. The child paints the area around the heart using red paint. If using paper hearts the children can collage the hearts to the paper plate hat. **Many children placed paint blobs on both sides of the heart and it was still effective.**

**Extension:** The children used the heart shaped punched paper to create their own headbands. These pieces of punched paper can also be pasted as collage material.



**Notes:**

- The children really enjoyed this activity
- Instead of doing squash painting the children can just paint the hats
- Pink and white confetti can be used instead of the cut out hearts



**Circle printing and painting**

This activity is best done with the slightly older children as younger children struggle to make clear prints and to paint within the lines. If you do want to do this with the younger children expect a lot of over printing and several children will attempt to paint using the plastic cups. I prefer to put the paint on sponge on the flat trays but this activity works fine without the sponge if you don't have any.

**Themes:** Shape – Circles

**Ages:** 3 ½/4 - 5 year olds

**Skills:** Small and large muscles, eye hand co-ordination

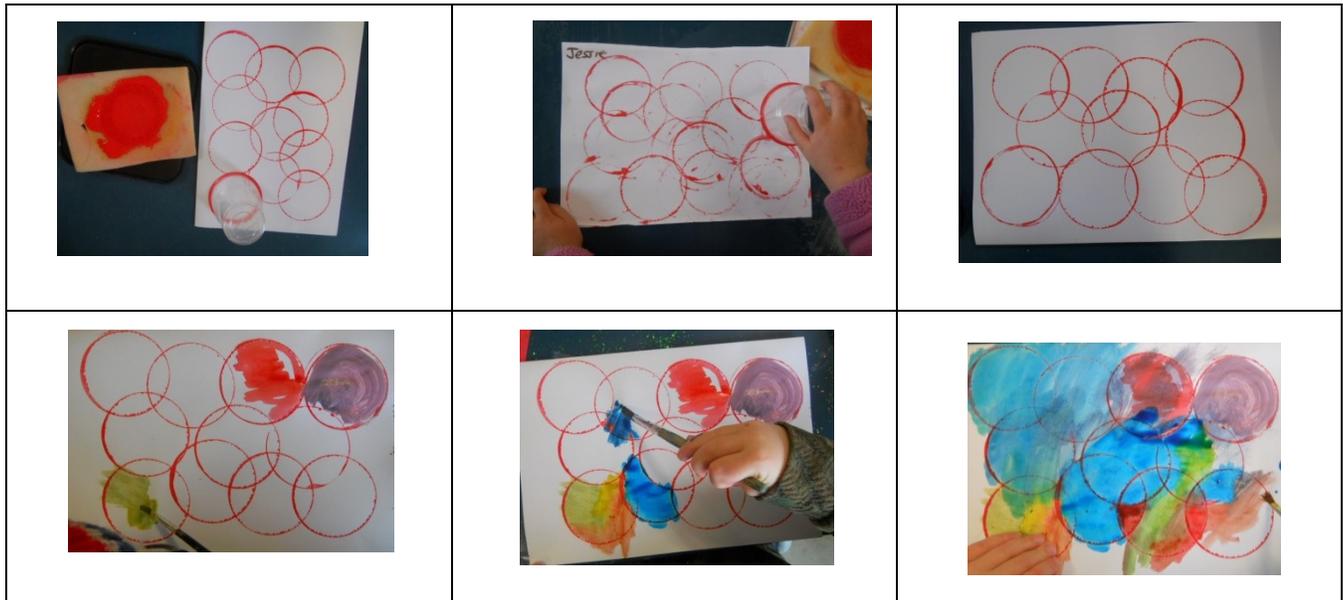
**Materials:**

- Plastic or paper cups ( or round yogurt containers)
- Paper – A4 or A3 or large sheets of newspaper are effective too
- Paint – mixed thickly and on flat lids (sponge optional)
- Water colour paints or regular paint
- Paint brushes – preferably thinner ones so the child can successfully stay inside the lines



**Teacher:** Prepare the paint

**Child:** Using a paper cup the child dips the cup into the paint on the flat container and places the cup down firmly on the paper creating a print. The cup is lifted carefully and the process is repeated until the page is covered with circle prints. Encourage the child to overlap some of the prints. If possible preferably leave to dry, before painting within the circles. Using the water colour paints the child carefully fills in the circle outlines taking care to stay within the printed lines. Many will struggle with this so don't worry too much if they go out of the lines.



**Notes:**

- Some children struggled to paint the individual circles. Let them enjoy the sensory aspect of the activity
- Many children will overprint the circles so there are no clear spaces to paint. This is particularly the case with the younger children and earlier in the year.
- Some of the children damaged the plastic cups. Discourage this but have spares handy
- Extension: Once the printing is complete the children can paint the cups and leave them to dry.



**Stickers on name or shape outlines**

This activity is great for name recognition and eye hand coordination and fine motor practice. I had a whole lot of computer labels that I was no longer using so I cut them into smaller stickers and they worked perfectly for this activity. If you have other small stickers they will also work well such as round stickers. (Sorry the photos are a bit tricky to see) I wrote the children's names as large as I could on the paper. You can also draw lines or shapes for the children to cover with stickers.

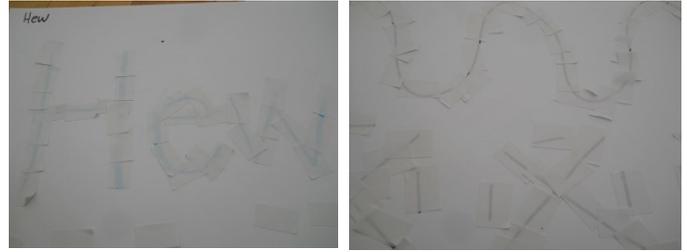
**Themes:** Myself, shapes

**Ages:** 3 ½ - 5 year olds

**Skills:** Small and large muscles, eye hand co-ordination

**Materials:**

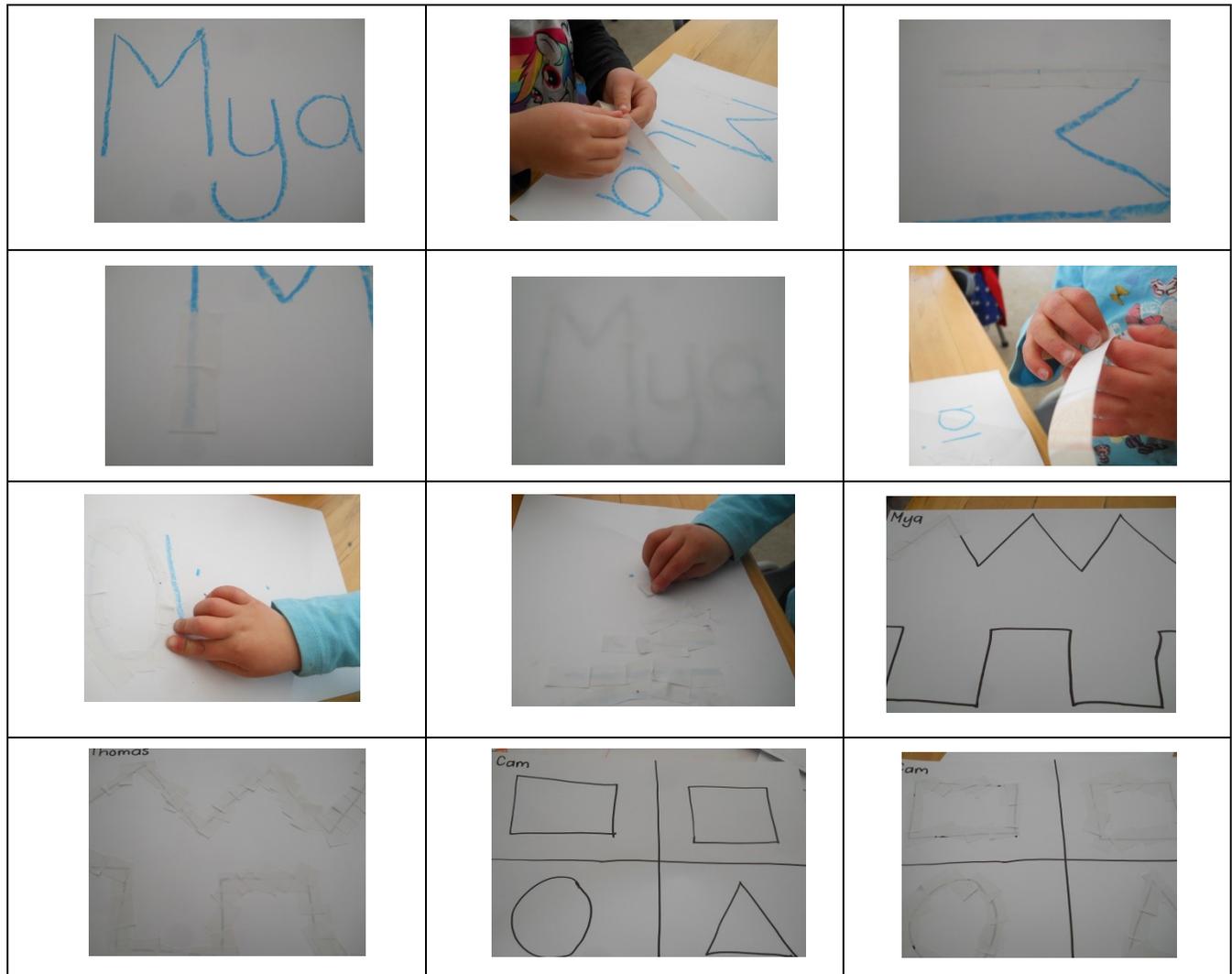
- Paper
- Stickers or computer labels cut smaller



**Teacher:** Prepare the pages with the children's names or shapes. Cut the labels smaller

**Child:** Using the small stickers the child carefully places them on the lines of the name until the lines are filled with stickers.

**Optional:** The child can colour the stickers.



**Notes:**

- Some children stuck stickers over each other instead of along the lines.
- Encourage the children to start from left to right ( the same as writing their own names) I place a dot on the left side where they should begin
- Be prepared for the children to want to make several pictures
- The boys really enjoyed this activity

**Happy teaching Regards Karin**

