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Fimo, Formello and Prima

Age Group: Any

Ideal Number: Whole group

Amount of Time: Varies

Fimo, Formello and Prima are all modelling materials which can be hardened in a home oven. They are available in a huge variety of colours however the colours can be easily mixed so I would recommend sticking to a few (red, yellow, blue, white and black). Provide a selection of knives, cocktail sticks, rolling pins and small cutters (plastic children's ones are fine). You can also get special varnish which makes eyes and noses shine but I don't recommend varnishing whole models, I find it tends to peel off.

As well as small models you can make

- Earrings: you can buy earring wires and hooks from a craft shop. Bake the earrings with the wires in them and attach hooks once they have cooled.
- Brooches: glue a brooch pin to the back after baking.
- Pendants: make a hole with a cocktail stick before baking then hang on a string.
- Fridge magnets: you can get small magnets to glue on the back. If you can find it self adhesive magnetic tape is a good option as it can be cut to size.
- Small insects and flowers look effective glued onto a rock. Glue a piece of felt to the bottom to stop it scratching anything.
- Christmas tree decorations: Insert an earring wire before baking. Add a hanging loop once cooled.
- Beads: bake small beads on a cocktail stick

When making these models make sure that all the pieces are securely attached before baking or they may break up. If a piece does come off it can be glued back on. Keep checking regularly while the items are baking, flat items cook quicker than taller ones. Don't make brooches or magnets too thin. They should be at least 4mm thick, also avoid trailing bits which tend to snap off.

Finally although these materials may seem expensive you don't need very much and they keep quite well if wrapped in plastic bags, the manufacturers say about two years. . NOTE do not use cling film, the two react so the fimo no longer hardens properly.

Dip it film

Age Group: 8+

Ideal Number: Whole group

Amount of Time: Varies

This is a liquid plastic which dries transparent and looks rather like cellophane. It comes in paint tins and can be used straight from the container.

The idea is to bend wire into various shaped loops and then dip it into the liquid and get a film (as though you were going to blow a bubble). Leave the film to dry (it is easiest to stick them into a block of plastercine as they must not touch anything).

Once dry you can twist the different shapes together to make sculptures, hang them up as mobiles etc.

It may be best to start with simple shapes stars, moons but you can make quite complex ones even letters of the alphabet or 3D models.

Age Group: Any

New clay

Ideal Number: Whole group

Amount of Time: Varies

This clay has nylon fibres in it meaning that it does not break up as easily as normal clay when it is left to dry. You can also by a liquid hardener and bake the clay in a home oven. It is best to stick to simple chunky models. Try making little dishes to hold night lights. You can press things into the clay to make patterns.

Mouldable wax

Age Group: Any

Ideal Number: Whole group

Amount of Time: Varies

There are two types of mouldable wax. The first comes as thick sheets which need to be soaked in boiling water. They can then be rolled around a wick to form candles. You can also cut out shapes and press them onto candles for decoration.

The second type is not as easily available but is great to use. It comes as a pack of thin sheets in a variety of colours and may be available from educational suppliers and small craft shops. Simply roll in the hands until soft then press onto a candle to add decoration.

Glass Paints

Age Group: 9+

Ideal Number: 8-10

Amount of Time: Varies

There are two parts to the glass paints, the outliner paste which comes in a small tube and the actual paint. It can take quite a long time to draw the outlines so the number of paste tubes you have dictates the number of people. It may be best to run another activity at the same time.

You can paint on almost any glass object but flat surfaces are easier to start with. Try using mirror tiles or clip photo frames. Mark out the design on paper fist. If you are using a sheet of glass you can place the paper under it as a guide. Make sure the glass you are using is really clean by washing with sugar soap. Squeeze the outliner tube gently to draw in your design. If you make a mistake it can be removed with a tissue while still wet.

Once the outline has dried you can fill in the areas with the glass paint. You can also get ceramic paints which can be used in a similar way.

Plastic Canvas

Age Group: Any

Ideal Number: Whole group

Amount of Time: Varies

This is a fabric which is used in cross stitch. It is easy to use as it does not fray and is solid enough to be held easily. There are lots of books with simple designs and instructions which children can follow (stick to ones with whole crosses). Once you have completed the deign cut it out and neaten the back by gluing on some felt. You can now glue on a brooch clip or small magnet, self adhesive magnetic tape is ideal. If you leave a loop at the top you could make the picture into a pendant.

Plaster of Paris

Age Group: Any

Ideal Number: Whole group

Amount of Time: Varies

This comes as a white powder whcih you mix with water and is easily available. You do not need to

buy expensive moulds, you can use anything as long as you can peel it off once the plaster has set.

To work out how much you need fill the mould with water. Always mix plaster of paris in a plastic bowl, that way if it sets before you have chance to wash the bowl you can flex the plastic and it will break off. If you have any plaster left over do not pour it down the sink. It could set and block the drains. Pour it into a container and let it set before throwing it away. Always add the powder to the water and stir gently. you want to avoid air bubbles getting in. Keep adding powder until the mixture is the thickness of double cream. Tap the bowl on a hard surface to get rid of any air then pour into the mould. When the mould is half full tap it to make sure the plaster gets into all the corners then fill it up.

Try placing things like pine cones into a plastic tray and pouring the plaster on top.

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