
FEATURE

Free and easy sock crafts

In our throw-away culture, we often discard socks with holes and frayed tops. Why not teach children about recycling and have fun by making the old socks into something new?

Invite parents to donate old or unwanted socks, or buy used socks at garage sales. Look for solid colored and patterned socks as well as adult and child sizes. Wash socks before using them.

Sock puppets

These free, easy-to-make puppets are old hat for early childhood educators. With a little imagination, you can create puppets to match the characters in children's books or to create animals (snake, lizard, caterpillar, rabbit, cat, and dog, for example).

Here's what you need:

- old sock, solid color
- permanent marker
- yarn
- fabric scraps, ribbon, lace, and other notions (optional)

1. Pull the sock onto your hand, so that your fingers fit into the sock toe.
2. Draw eyes and mouth with the marker.
3. Sew yarn at the top for hair.
4. Vary the puppet by sewing on other facial features such as ears

and tongue, or clothing such as hat, collar, and earrings.

Square potholders

Running out of loops for your class loom? Stretch socks can provide a substitute.

Here's what you need:

- 4-6 clean socks, adult size
- weaving loom and hook
- scissors

1. Lay a sock flat on its side, and cut off the toe.
2. Keeping the sock flat, cut vertically up the sock body at ½-inch intervals, creating 10-12 loops.
3. Cut off the heel and top. Save the top to use in other projects.
4. Repeat with other socks.
5. Stretch the loops onto the loom, top to bottom. Stretch other loops sideways across the loom, weaving over and under the first loops.



CREATIVE COMMONS: PHOTO BY HCPLEBRANCH

6. To finish the edges, hook one loop into the next, going completely around the square.
7. Tie an extra loop at the last corner for hanging.

Sock quilt

The finished size of a quilt depends upon the number of socks you can gather. A typical toddler quilt is 35 inches by 45 inches, and a full size quilt is 81 inches by 88 inches.

With white athletic socks, you can alternate the tube top with the sock body. The body turned inside out may provide a softer texture. If you don't like white, dye the squares the desired colors.

Here's what you need:

- old socks
 - scissors
 - sewing machine
 - batting
 - fabric for quilt back
 - yarn
1. Cut off the top of an old sock. Cut down one side of the top, and lay it flat.
 2. Cut off the toes and heels, and put aside.
 3. Cut along one side of the remaining sock body, and lay it flat.
 4. Trim the flat pieces to make them the same size, either a square or rectangle.
 5. Repeat with the other socks.
 6. Arrange the squares by color or pattern into a quilt design.
 7. Sew the squares together.
 8. Cut batting to fit.
 9. Sandwich the batting between the sock front and backing fabric. Trim the backing 2 inches longer on each side.

10. Turn down the backing over the front to form a hem. Pin, baste, and sew.
11. At the corners of each square on the quilt front, pull yarn through all thicknesses and back up again. Cut yarn into desired length and knot securely.

Cozies, beanbags, and more

Use discarded sock parts—or whole socks—for other projects.

- The tube top of an athletic sock makes a great cozie for drinking glasses and bottles to keep cold drinks cold and warm drinks warm. Just stitch a hem around the bottom to keep the edge from fraying.
- Fill a sock top with beans or small pebbles, and sew the ends securely to make a beanbag.
- Stuff cut-off toes and heels into another sock, and sew the sock shut to make a ball.
- Fill a sock top with potpourri or grated soap flakes, and sew it shut to make a sachet. Place in a closet to banish the musty smell.
- Slip a sock top over an eraser for use on a chalkboard or dry erase board. ■

