

Explore & Describe

Torn Paper Collage

Prepare the materials

- **9 x 12 construction paper in a variety of colors.** Each child needs 1 sheet to start with. Make extra construction paper in all colors available for kids to use as needed during the explore & describe mini lesson and during independent art time.
- **Test your construction paper!** We recommend Tru-ray construction paper, but any brand will work. Most brands of construction paper will tear in long, straight lines vertically, and tear in diagonals when held horizontally. However, some brands are the reverse! Make sure you know which direction your brand of paper tears in, so that you can adjust the direction if needed.
- **Have a plan to save the paper scraps!** Once your students have explored this material, they can use their paper manipulating skills to collage puppet characters or settings! Having a bunch of already torn scraps will help them get started more quickly. Gather all of the scraps into one large bag or box, or into 2-gallon Ziplocs for each table at the end of the lesson to use next time.
- **Glue sticks (optional)** are good to have on hand in case your class becomes attached to what they make during the independent exploration time.

Prepare the art making space

- **Seat kids in groups of 3-8** at tables or desks that are pushed together so that they can share paper scraps.
- **Tables should be cleared.**
- **Hide the scissors!** We will be ripping paper, not using scissors. With this technique, imagining ways to use random shapes is just as important as having the fine motor skills needed to execute a meticulous plan, reducing anxiety kids may have about art making. Allow kids to use scissors during independent time if they want.
- **Hide the glue sticks!** We are exploring and learning skills today, not making a finished product! That said, if your class becomes attached to what they created, give them 5 minutes to glue it together at the very end, while you collect the scraps.

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Planning

How will you set up playful exploration? Consider inviting kids to laugh like an “Evil Scientist” whenever they discover something, or listen to the first ripping sound to hear the paper say “hello!”

Assess your class. Do you want to add additional experiments to support or challenge your students? If so, we recommend adding one more experiment (after ripping and before layering), or doing the lesson a second time with new experiments chosen based on what you learn about your kids the first time

To support fine motor skill development:

- **Experiment with using force.** What will happen if we crush the paper using all of the muscles in our hand?
- **Experiment with being gentle.** What will happen if we use just our fingertips to make tiny rips?

To add motor skill challenge:

- **Experiment with folding.** What will happen if we fold and press our paper back and forth and back and forth over and over?
- **Experiment with rolling.** What will happen if we roll the paper? If we roll it around our finger or around our pencil?
- **Experiment with twisting.** What will happen if we hold the paper in two hands and twist them in opposite directions?

To challenge kids to notice deeply:

- **Experiment with sound.** What sound does the paper make when we rip it slowly, rip it quickly, crumple it?
 - **Notice & Describe texture.** What does the straight edge vs. the torn edge feel like? How can you describe them? What do they remind you of? What could you make with them?
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During Independent Art Making Time

- **Use the Describing Tool for Torn Paper Collage** to find specific words to describe kids’ choices.
- **Use the Observation Tool for Visual Arts** to notice how your kids are working as artists.