

Wood Scrap Sculptures

Summary Description: Children build “sculptures” on a base or pedestal using scrap wood.

Michigan Early Childhood Standards of Quality: Creative Arts – 1. Early Learning Expectation: Visual Arts. Children show how they feel, what they think, and what they are learning through experiences in the visual arts.

HighScope Curriculum content: KDI 40. Art Also: KDI 17. Fine-motor skills and KDI 35. Spatial awareness

HighScope COR Advantage items: X. Art. Also: J. Fine-motor skills and T. Geometry, shapes, and spatial awareness

Time of day: Small-group time

Materials:

- Wood scraps of different shapes and sizes collected from lumber yards, home improvement stores, and/or family contributions (sand any rough edges and remove any protruding nails or screws)
- Sturdy bases (e.g., heavy cardboard or plywood), approximately one-foot square
- Fasteners such as glue, glue sticks, and tape
- Damp sponges or paper towels to wipe up spills
- Examples of sculpture art reproductions from the DIA (for links to sculptures from the DIA, please see page 3)

Definition: A SCULPTURE is a 3-Dimensional (3D) piece of artwork.

Additional vocabulary words/topics to focus on while conversing with children: sculpture, build, color, size, shape, and texture

Beginning: Talk with the children about the DIA field trip and show them the pictures of sculpture art reproductions. Then say something like “When artists build things with wood, they are called sculptures. I wonder what sculptures you can build.” Give each child a base, a basket of wood scraps, and a glue stick.

Middle: Circulate and converse with children about the shapes and sizes of wood scraps they use in their sculptures. Use position words (such as on top of and next to) to describe how they arrange materials. Help them solve problems; e.g., how to get something to stand up or how to attach pieces of wood to each other or to the base. Put the rest of the wood scraps and an assortment of fasteners in the middle of the table for the group to share as back up materials.

The chart below offers an example, at each developmental level, of what children may say and do, along with ideas for scaffolding (supporting and gently extending) their learning.

Scaffolding Learning at Each Developmental Level		
Earlier	Middle	Later
Children may: Attach all the scraps directly to the base.	Children may: Stack two or three pieces to make a simple sculpture and say what it represents.	Children may: Construct a complex sculpture with many pieces of wood and position the wood to create a specific shape or representation.
Adults can: Select similar scraps and imitate other children’s actions.	Adults can: Comment on how children stacked their wood pieces using	Adults can: Comment on the variety of shapes and sizes children use.

	spatial words: "You glued this long piece underneath the short piece."	
Gentle Extension: Comment on the sizes and shapes of the scraps, and the children's actions with the materials; encourage children to describe the materials and what they do with them.	Gentle Extension: Wonder out loud what would happen if children attached a piece "on top of" another piece or tried to make a "taller" sculpture, remembering to respect children's choices of how to use the materials.	Gentle Extension: Ask children to describe the wood scraps and explain how they solved problems getting the materials to do what they wanted; encourage children to use less common position words such as beneath, alongside, and protruding; comment on how children choose pieces of wood because of their similarities to the objects they wanted to represent.

End: Let children know when there are about five minutes left in the activity. Clean up together, saving any usable wood scraps and letting children know where they can find them if they want to make more sculptures at work time. Suggest that children move like a piece of wood to the next activity in the daily routine.



Follow up: Take a walking field trip to a nearby park or other location where children can see sculptures in the community.

Links to sculptures from the Detroit Institute of Arts:

Viewing this as a printed resource? You can find the art pieces listed below by visiting <https://dia.org/collection> and searching for each art piece by name.

- *Coo Wha Zee, 1962*
- *Man Crossing a Square on a Sunny Morning, 1950*
- *Moonmad, 1944*
- *Reclining Figure, 1939*
- *Spirit Box, 2009*