

Building with Cornstarch Beads

The process of exploring, experimenting and discovering “what can stick together” will delight toddlers and preschoolers. Cornstarch bead building provides children with an early sculpture experience. By sticking and building to create three dimensional designs, children improve fine motor control in their hands and fingers.

In The Wonder Cabinet:

Today, children are using biodegradable packing beads to create three dimensional masterpieces. When children dampen the beads, they stick to paper and to each other. Children can build up, out, or create tall structures by using the beads to stick many different sheets of paper, sponges, cardboard, or other materials together.

Part of the magic of this activity is that it is both art and science. Wetting the bead causes the cornstarch to dissolve and become sticky. This simple process can be the springboard for discussions about liquids and solids, physical changes, and mixtures.

At Home:

The materials used in this activity are easy to find at home. The next time you receive a package with cornstarch beads (which are different from Styrofoam beads often used as packing material), let your child dip the beads in a little bit of water and use them to decorate the cardboard box they came in! You may also want to try mixing some food coloring with the water in the sponge and let your child watch what happens when the bead is dipped into the color.

Suggested materials:

- Cornstarch beads. These biodegradable packing beads can be purchased at packing supply stores or discountschoolsupply.com
- Items to stick beads onto such as, cardboard scraps, construction paper, old cardboard jewelry boxes, paper grocery bags, tissue paper, old postcards, wallpaper scraps