

Artful Parenting- May's Edition

Staying Creative as a Family



**Let Your Imagination
Run Wild with
Creative Writing**

Emily Lim-Leh has authored 35 children's books. She is a 3-time IPPY Award winner and 1st South-east Asian recipient of the Moonbeam Children's Book Award. Her bestselling Toy series has been published in 5 countries. She blogs about books and parenting at mummumsttheword.wordpress.com. Emily is a member of the Gallery's Museum Education Advisory Panel.

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Writing a story can be daunting. How can I make writing fun for my child?

EL: The best way to get your child started on writing a story is to make it as fun as possible (i.e. it shouldn't feel like a chore or homework). That means no grading, no criticism and no rules. Allow your child's imagination to flow and you flow along with it.

How do I get my child started?

EL: Start by creating stories together. And there are many ways you can kick-start the creative juices.

Here are a few:

1. Write lists for creative/outlandish situations and compare your lists:

E.g. if you had to go to outer-space, what are 10 things you must bring along? If you were on a deserted island, what are 20 things you need to survive? These need not be 'practical' items. The more outlandish the items, the more scope for story ideas.

2. Write short silly poems

Pick a topic of interest to your child and write silly poems around it together. E.g. If I can have 10 pets, what will they be? If I can build a robot, what will I design it to do?

3. Use writing prompts to spark your story ideas

Scholastic has a fun story starter programme to provide some prompts to spark story ideas.

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/story-starters/>

Can you share 3 tips to sustain my child's interest in creative writing?

EL:

1. Read! The best way to sustain interest in writing is to read good children's books that pique the imagination. Start with reading a few children's picture books together and try adding an extra story scene to the book (say 30-50 words).

2. Watch! Watch animated movies together and then discuss the storyline. Write alternative endings to that story.

3. Create! Create a simple picture book. After trying the different writing ideas above, pick one story to develop, draw accompanying pictures and design the book cover. End off with a short paragraph about the author at the end of the book – that's usually the child's favourite part.



Making and Tinkering at Home

Yeo Shih Yun is a Singaporean ink artist who uses inventive and playful tools such as robots and remote-controlled toy cars to create paintings of geometric and organic shapes and lines. Her experimentations of fusing the traditional form with contemporary mediums has garnered much acclaim, including winning the Sovereign Asian Art Prize People's Choice Award in 2012. Shih Yun is featured at Keppel Centre for Art Education, where she has created an immersive ink installation for families and children.

Why is tinkering important and essential to a child's development?

SY: "All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better." - Samuel Beckett. There are many benefits of tinkering. It's great to let kids explore and try things out without an absolute outcome. Let them make mistakes and fail, and through this makes them more creative as usually there are more than one solution to a problem. Another good reason is to get them off their digital devices and use their hands and eyes to create things. Lastly, using their hands to do creative activities can calm their breathing, and help their body to relax. This stimulates the production of endorphins – the brain's mood enhancers. Happy kids, happy mums.

How do I direct my child's interest in tinkering into appropriate outlets such as painting and experimenting?

SY: First, it is important to know your child's interests. Is your child into robotics, painting or science experiments? There are many free online lessons, once you know what you are researching for. Then, it is a matter of finding one that looks interesting and at the same time suitable for your child's age group and interest. It is good to start with something simpler for the first project.

Once you have prepared the materials and environment for your child, invite them to start on a tinkering project during the weekends, holiday and even now when we are all staying at home with nowhere to go! Sometimes you will need to step in to kick-start the project. Make it look fun (a tiny bit of acting is necessary) and your child will be enticed to join in the fun as well! This is when you let them take over, sit back and relax with a cup of tea while they tinker!

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How can I create or prepare a makerspace at home for my child?

SY: Place recycled and interesting materials in a box. Using recycled cardboard boxes from your grocery deliveries work too! This is where your child will start his / her tinkering project by choosing items that inspire them. Hence, the more materials collected, the merrier it will be. You will need some simple tools like glue, scissors, paints, brushes and masking tape. Use the child's study desk or the dining table as the working space. It is also good to put some newspaper on the working surface for easy clean-up!