



# Fun with the Sun!



| BY SHARON KATZ COOPER |

## This Helps Develop:

Gathering objects and considering their shapes and patterns helps develop cognitive skills by stimulating awareness, observation, and reasoning. Comparing and contrasting items and the shadows they make encourages the development of skills that will be useful for science, art, and mathematics.

This activity also develops fine motor skills – the use of small muscle movements in the hands that occur in coordination with the eyes. Children build fine motor skills when parents encourage them to select and gather their own objects with their hands, examine them carefully and place them into patterns on the paper.

Social emotional development involves a child's feelings of self worth, confidence, and pride as well as their ability to get along with others in a group setting. Children love to create something that belongs to them, and that they can share with others. As you make your beautiful artwork, your child will develop a sense of achievement. If you encourage your child to describe the objects he or she uses and the patterns she creates, you will also enhance your child's communication skills.

*This monthly family activity series, "Hands-on Kids!" is brought to you by a partnership between the Children's Museum of Northern Virginia (CMNOVA) and FAMILY Magazine. For more activities you can do with your children to spark their love of learning, visit the CMNOVA web site at [www.cmnova.org](http://www.cmnova.org). CMNOVA is committed to building a place where our children can freely explore and develop a lifelong love of learning. Sharon*

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Children love patterns and nature gives us so many! As spring turns into summer this month, encourage children to look around them at the many leaves, flowers and other natural objects they see. Making sun prints with objects gathered from the world around us can be a fascinating and thought-provoking activity for children of many ages. By choosing carefully and thinking about shapes and shadows, you and your children can use the sun to create your own sun prints.

Photo-sensitive paper is inexpensive and can be purchased at many craft stores or through [www.acornnaturalists.com](http://www.acornnaturalists.com). It can provide hours of creative artwork with little mess or intensive supervision.

Encourage your children to gather objects that are relatively flat with interesting patterns or edges. Ask them to think about the dark and light patterns that will be created by sunlight. They could even make predictions about the kinds of shapes that will appear on their paper. This activity will have your children thinking about contrast, dark and light, and shapes and shadows.

Once you have done a couple of simple prints, encourage your children to experiment. What happens if they layer objects on top of each other? What if the objects are bulky and do not lay flat on the paper – what kinds of images do those objects make? What if an object is partially translucent? Encourage your children to think about the difference between objects that are translucent, transparent and opaque. What kinds of sun images will these different objects make?

Older children may ask how the sun print paper works. This will give you a chance to discuss chemical reactions with your children. The sun print paper is a chemical reaction triggered by sunlight.

Once you have images that you like, you can use them to make cards, wrapping paper

decorations, scrapbook pages, book covers, or a thousand other things.

## Here's What You Need...

- A package (or several) of sun print paper
- Natural objects of your choice
- A flat baking sheet
- Water
- Your imagination!

## Directions:

1. Gather your objects, choosing things that have interesting and/or clearly defined edges or patterns sunlight will shine through. Start out with things that are relatively flat. They will lie better on the paper and make a clearer image.
2. Place your paper on a baking sheet in a sunny spot, such as a windowsill or outside on a balcony or front step.
3. Arrange your objects in a pattern you like. Cover them with the clear plastic sheet included in the package.
4. Leave the paper in the sun for about 5 minutes until the paper fades and turns almost white.
5. Rinse your paper in tap water for about one minute. Your patterns should jump out.
6. Place your papers on newsprint to dry.
7. Admire your creations! Hang them up around the house, or use them as decorations for other paper-crafting projects.

