

All that glitters is not microplastic

A CELA Simple Guide to eco-sparkles

What's so bad about glitter?

Shredded from sheets of coated **plastic**, glitter sticks to your artwork for a while, and to the planet forever.

Similar to **microbeads**, which are now banned in the UK, Canada, USA and NZ*, a lot of glitter ends up in oceans after being washed off hands, tables and floors. While 'glitter-lung' is an internet hoax, there are cases of glitter's tiny sharp edges causing eye and nose **infections**.



Alternatives bring learning benefits

Problem solving - ask children to look in the garden or recycling box for other shiny materials

Fine motor skills - use a hole punch, shaped stamper or scissors to cut small particles of paper, leaves, flowers etc

Creativity - glitter is decorative rather than creative and finding alternatives means using imagination and innovation

Sustainability - fish are shiny on the outside, they don't need to shine inside too! Talk about how we can avoid washing hard objects into the ocean.

Outdoor connections - many glitter alternatives are outside - leaves, flowers, sand - head to the garden or take an excursion to the park.

Sensory - natural options may offer smells, textures, taste or sounds.



Pantry options

Food dye mixed with table salt or rock salt is a popular option. Depending on your service's **policy** for using food products, you might find the ingredients for natural glitter in your kitchen.

The usual technique is to combine a few drops of colouring with a cup of salt and **dry** overnight on a flat surface like a baking tray.

This approach also lets children **control** how deep the colours are.

Good old Epsom salts

Fancy coloured bath salts are usually nothing more than inexpensive and relatively sustainable Epsom salts and dye. Formed by chalk and clay, Epsom salts have many uses and eco-glitter can be one.

Use vegetable dyes to make an even more eco-friendly glitter with the beautiful, uneven crystals.



Can't give up glitter?

Glitter addiction can be a hard habit to kick - but you don't have to go cold turkey!

1. Reduce your glitter usage to a few special occasions.
2. Use less glitter in a project and combine it with natural options
3. Use up your current supplies and commit to buying 'eco' glitter from then on. Prices are coming down as more people make the switch.

White sand

If you've tried dyeing normal sand with poor results, instead try a bag of white aquarium sand from a pet supplier.

You will get a brighter result, and the sand has already been washed.

Larger suppliers may offer aquarium sand in a range of crystal sizes, which gives children more textures to enjoy.



Nature shines

Australian native and introduced plants come in more colours than a glitter factory can produce, and at much less cost to both the environment and your budget.

Fresh or dried native wattle, grevillea and bottlebrush blossoms work well, as do the edible petals of violets and nasturtiums. Use hole punches and scrapbook stampers to create tiny shapes from leaves, revealing surprising detail in each snip.



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*At the time of writing, Australian manufacturers were voluntarily phasing out microbeads and major supermarket chains had banned products with microbeads from their shelves. Despite a relatively short period of use in bathing products, microbeads have now been found in every ocean floor. Glitter is a microplastic and several research reports have suggested glitter and other tiny plastics should also be banned. December 2017.