


# Teen CRAFT Projects



tina coleman

peggie llanes



Teen  
CRAFT  
Projects



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# Teen CRAFT Projects

Tina Coleman and Peggie Llanes

*Foreword by Amy Alessio and Katie LaMantia*



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**Tina Coleman** is membership specialist for the membership development department of the American Library Association, as well as staff liaison to both the Virtual Communities in Libraries Member Interest Group and the Comics and Graphic Novels in Libraries Member Interest Group. Often recognized as ALA's "on-staff fan-girl," she also writes fiction and poetry, reviews books for *Booklist* magazine, and is an avid music aficionado. She's a crafter and artist who works on projects on her own and with her mother for sale locally. Her work at ALA has given her an insider's view of the library world and a way to apply her multiple creative talents.

**Peggie Llanes** worked for many years at Christopher House, a Chicago day care and social services center, where she had extensive training in child development, social service, and community and group work. Through her experience working with underprivileged children, she developed a keen sense of the importance of presenting open-ended projects that promote creativity and individuality and enhance self-esteem. Beyond crafting and developing new projects, she is also currently an active volunteer and board member of St. Mary of Providence, a residential facility for adult women with developmental disabilities. Her biggest joy over the past year has been seeing how going through many of these craft projects has helped her daughter, Melissa, who has developmental delays, increase her skill levels, concentration, and self-expression.

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**S TEENS LOOK FOR WAYS TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES,** they often turn to crafts. Crafting fulfills several important developmental needs for this age group. In addition to helping young adults explore their creativity and learn new skills, it opens the way for them to socialize and build confidence. Teen crafters can link up with like-minded others and become part of a group, and success with a project can lead them to a hobby or art form they'll enjoy the rest of their lives. The library offers a great setting for teen crafts, but dealing with shrinking staff and resource budgets is a continuing challenge, as is finding crafts simple enough for the inexperienced yet challenging enough to give talented crafters room to grow.

Teens and staff at the Schaumburg Township District Library were thrilled to be asked to test the crafts for this special resource. Kids in grades 6 through high school participated. All found something to like, and the projects inspired some staff to learn new skills. Librarian-student Katie LaMantia, herself a graduate of the library's teen services programs, worked with author Tina Coleman to coordinate the projects. A few of the crafts were tested by a small group of girls in evening programs; more often, they were tested by our entire Teen Corps group, of which about half are boys. The crafts had the teens clamoring to participate, something Tina experienced firsthand when she attended a Teen Corps meeting where a craft was being tested. The teens descended upon the supplies and instructions in a flurry of controlled chaos. There is now interest in a crafting club at the library.

Katie found the experience of working with teens and Tina to be invaluable. One of her favorite crafts was creating memory boards. Although it's a very simple craft, it offered lots of opportunities for kids to express themselves using different



fabrics, ribbons, beads and buttons, and other materials. Teens could be as minimalist or as accessory-crazy as they wanted. It was great for the librarians, too, because it required minimal setup and no special tools. Participants didn't always proceed exactly as the instructions were written, but these projects have been developed in such a way that crafters could easily make them their own. Discovering they wanted to make wall hangings instead of no-sew organizers, a few boys bonded and surprised the staff with some exceptionally inventive neon collages. Boys enjoyed many of the crafts, tailoring each with a unique touch. One of Katie's favorite reactions came from a normally hyperactive eighth-grade boy who was creating a no-sew organizer: "Wow. This is actually fun!" Coming from a teenage boy, this is the highest praise.

Katie sent Tina summaries of the teens' reactions to the projects, along with photos and tips for making the book as practical as possible for libraries of all sizes. Staff agreed that participating in the testing gave Schaumburg Township teens the chance to let loose their inner artist. All the tweens and teens enjoyed being part of the creative process and experimenting with the various media and supplies. They also appreciated that their ideas and opinions were being used to help improve the crafting instructions.

Allowing for a variety of skill levels and activities, this book is a great resource for developing popular, cost-effective, ecologically responsible teen craft programs that are really fun.

—*Amy Alessio and Katie LaMantia*

# acknowledgments

W

**E'D LIKE TO TAKE A MOMENT TO THANK THE FOLKS** at Schaumburg Township District Library: Amy Alesio and Katie LaMantia and all of the kids in their wonderful Teen Corps group. They took our work and road tested the projects to make sure they worked and were loads of fun.

Thanks to Tina for inviting me back for a second round of crafting and writing and for encouraging me to stretch my creativity. She always reminds me that one is never too old to learn something new and that I may know a trick or two that I can share with others. I hope we will continue to inspire each other to always be open to new discoveries.

Thanks also to my hubby, Ray, for his support and encouragement and for not complaining about a messy house and many days and nights of crafting. He is still our biggest fan!

Thanks to my daughter, Melissa, for trying to help us with our projects and for always keeping a keen eye out for recycled supplies. Also thanks to the rest of my family and friends who continue to support our endeavors. It is clear to me that they are really listening to the recycle, repurpose ideas behind our crafting projects because they always bring us more materials to work with and challenge us to come up with new projects for them.

—Peggie Llanes

There are so many people that helped us write this book. Many thanks to the ALA Editions crew, especially Stephanie for advising and giving us a hard deadline

when we really needed it. Thanks to John for being not only an awesome boss, but a good sounding board as well. Thanks to Pat for templates and tutorials and tons of ideas. Thanks to Dad for food and his truckload of enthusiasm for every project. Thanks to Jérôme, who managed to be helpful from a thousand miles away, especially in the creation of robots and card games. Thanks to Mel, for being as patient as she's able, and thanks to Sofiana and Megan and all of my wonderfully creative and inspirational friends.

Extra special thanks to the librarians—you are all superheroes.

—*Tina Coleman*



**WELCOME TO TEEN CRAFT PROJECTS 2! WHETHER** you've dog-eared all the pages in our first book and are desperate for more, or you're just beginning your crafting endeavors, in this volume you'll find twelve cool craft projects to do with your teen group. From turning that stack of old magazines and catalogs into stationery to baking your own army of adorable clay creatures, we've got some doozies covered.

In developing this batch of projects, we consciously set out to come up with ideas that would engage teens of all stripes—boys, girls, geeks, hipsters, artists, activists, fans, and even a few smarty-pants types. We're pleased to present a dozen opportunities for your teens to get creative making their own flashy flair, their own decor, and even their own games. We encourage not only the teens, but also you, the librarian, to exercise your imagination and let your unique style shine through.

One of the new aspects of this book is the addition of a quick-fire version for most of the projects. With sports, clubs, SAT prep, after-school jobs, homework, band practice, and a host of other activities competing for their attention, teens can often be pressed for time. We know that while you may want to present some programming, your teens may not have two or three hours to do a full-length project. Thus, we try to give you some tips on how to accomplish each project in a simple 40-minute program. Two main time-savers are to take on more of the prep work yourself and to limit the creative choices. We recommend doing the full version of the project whenever possible.

Along with the quick-fire versions, we've also included some hints on how you might think about a craft differently in order to adapt it to other groups or programs: from providing more sophisticated materials for adults and seniors, to

scaling things down for younger kids, to organizing parent-child or other shared community projects. We encourage you to look at the projects with an eye toward how they would best fit at your library.

We include some vital statistics in the header of each project:

**Difficulty:** This will give you an idea of how hard you can expect a project to be. Keep in mind that this gauge of difficulty applies to teens in general. Projects may be more or less difficult depending on age, skill level, experience, and interest.

**Time:** This is a very general approximation of how long the project should take under optimal conditions (not including cleanup or your prep work). Take your own experience with your teens into account when scheduling your program.

**Supervision:** This is a guide as to how closely you'll need to monitor the group while they work on the project.

**Group Size:** This is our recommendation for how many participants you should plan for per adult supervisor. We try to take all of the other factors into consideration for this guideline, and we can't stress enough how important it is to pay attention to your group size. If you have a lot of teens who are interested in a program, consider getting more adult volunteers or staff to help supervise, or break the group into more than one session.

**Mess Factor:** This is a general warning to you about how messy you can expect your space to get. Kids can make a mess under the best of circumstances with a sort of heroic ability, so mainly just be prepared.

In the end these are all just guidelines. You know your regular teens best, so you should be able to read through the instructions and get a sense of any adjustments you'll need to make. See appendix C for a glossary of terms that might be unfamiliar to you.

To ensure that your program goes smoothly and your teens have fun, you'll need to do a certain amount of prep work ahead of time. As group projects, these don't work well if you're not prepared. With this in mind, we've provided "Getting the Project Ready" and "Getting the Room Ready" sections for each craft. It is *highly recommended* that you follow these directions for group projects. In the long run, it will make your life much easier.

Here's an outline of prep work that you'll need to expect to do for each project:

**Read the full set of instructions.** This will give you a sense of what each step entails and how the craft goes together. Take this opportunity to make notes about changes you may need to make for your particular group of teens.

**Make (or have made) a finished sample.** It's important to have a sample on hand so teens have something to refer to when making their own, but you can also use the sample (or samples) to advertise and drum up interest in the program. While our first choice would be for you to make a sample yourself, so you

have firsthand experience of the instructions and techniques, you can also have another volunteer or a reliable and crafty member of your teen group make a sample.

**Sort and prepare your space and materials.** Your program will go much more smoothly if you have your materials prepared and laid out when your group gets started. Your space will be much easier to manage if your tables are covered, wastebaskets are handy, and your supplies, tools, and materials are organized. Often we call for the use of trays or containers of some sort for each participant to keep their working materials together. Most of our recommendations for room layout include a main worktable (or tables) and a separate side table for materials and supplies. This cuts down on confusion and disputes and allows for a better flow.

The basics of almost any crafting program are to know your resources well. Resources include supplies, materials, and tools, of course, but they also include yourself and your own knowledge and creativity, and your teens.

As in our previous book, most of our projects rely heavily on recycled materials. This is better for the environment and better for your budget. When sourcing materials, remember to look around your library first. Often your outdated magazines, catalogs, weeded books, damaged DVDs or CDs, and so on can make up a sizable stash. And don't forget to put the word out to other staff and even your patrons if you're looking for a specific type of item. Recycling for programs can be a great way to make your community feel more connected to the library.

Use your budget wisely when purchasing supplies, materials, and tools. Free or inexpensive materials are all around you. What doesn't come in from donations (or participants bringing their own) you can get from flea markets, thrift shops, garage sales, discount and dollar stores, you name it. Finding things on the Internet can save you cash—lots of materials and tools are available online.

When looking for tools, be frugal but canny. Spending \$30 on a grommet setter or two may seem like a luxury, but your group will use them over and over again. Spending the same money on something like stickers is less economical, since they can only be used once, and you can do pretty much the same thing (with more creative results) with some choice paper scrap and decoupage. Likewise, sometimes buying a better quality, but slightly more expensive, product will save you money in the long run. Don't skimp on tools that you'll be using more than once, sewing supplies, packing tape (it's worth it to get the thicker variety), or quick-drying multipurpose glue (we like Quick Glue or E-6000 brands). If you can, invest in a few heavy-duty tablecloths or drop cloths that you can use to cover your tables for multiple sessions.

After getting a load of supplies and materials via donation, thrift shopping, and so on, you'll often need to prep those materials by doing a bit of deconstructing. Deconstructing can be a fun (and educational) group project all on its own. Taking apart a pair of jeans, a leather jacket, or a bag will show you a lot about how those things are made. Breaking apart watches, jewelry, or clocks to get at the parts



inside can give you an idea of how they work and how you can remake them into something new. You can even set goals for using every scrap from those pieces that you can. (See projects like Rock Star Jewelry or Recycled Mobiles.)

One thing to keep in mind about the materials and supplies we list in our projects is that almost everything is optional. Our lists are designed to include all of the possible creative options, but you don't need to provide every single thing we suggest. Read through the instructions and decide which materials you really need and which components you want to offer.

Remember, too, that you are a valuable resource unto yourself. You know your teens, your library, and your community best, so you should know what's possible. Be flexible in interpreting our instructions if you need to be. As we always say, there's no right way to do crafts. Feel free to be creative about reworking the rules as needed for your group. Depending on your teens, you may also need to work within their parameters. If you have lefties in your group, be sure to stock some left-handed scissors. If you have teens who are squeamish about messes, having plastic gloves or even wet wipes on hand may be a good solution. If someone is uncomfortable with the tools, try to find ways that he can get the needed result (for instance, ripping paper instead of cutting it).

Another key resource is your regular teen group. As you begin your craft program, it's worth sitting down with them to discuss what they want to work on and what kinds of materials they want to work with. Some may want to stick to projects that give them something to wear once they're done. Some may want ways to spruce up their bedrooms or lockers. Some may just know they want to work with hardware or clay. Giving them a voice early in the process will help them be more engaged in the projects. And it takes some of the pressure off of you to come up with all the different materials. If it's feasible, you can even take a few of them shopping for some of the key ingredients like fabrics or hardware.

Crafting programs in your library can be worthwhile to everyone who contributes to the program, from patrons who donate materials to volunteers who help with projects to the teens who do the crafts themselves. With some vision and a bit of glue you can come up with a program that dazzles the community.

Teens can benefit from crafting in so many ways. Crafts can provide opportunities for creativity and self-expression that teens often struggle to communicate. The skills they learn in crafting can be applied to other areas of life and vice versa; problem solving, teamwork, and self-sufficiency are all skills that can be learned and reinforced through crafting. It can be a focus for discussion and ideas, and even a springboard to learning more.

For example, when we first began this book we knew we wanted to do something with games, but through working on the Make Your Own Games project we learned so much about how traditional games are put together and developed and even revisited the rules to some of our favorite classic games. Working through projects like this will show you new avenues for being truly creative and taking your design into other realms entirely.



project

1

# design your own picture frames

**T**HIS EASY PICTURE FRAME PROJECT CAN BE A FUN DIVERSION for teens or an opportunity to make gifts for parents, teachers, or friends. The materials can be pulled together and left out for teens to work with as they please. Have photocopies of the instructions ready. As teens come in, hand them the instructions and point them toward your craft table.

Because the focus is really on embellishing the frames, this craft is a good pick for groups or for parent-child crafting programs. Embellishments can be as simple as a light dusting of glitter or as complex as a decoupage design. This flexibility allows teens to be creative whatever their level of craft experience.

The project also gives you the chance to recycle things you have on hand, and it can easily be adapted to suit preexisting programs on recycling or the environment. Cardboard boxes are great frame fodder and old magazines and newspapers make fabulous decorating scraps. Your materials list can be tailored to include whatever you have available. Keep in mind that sometimes it's the materials you provide that attract teens (especially boys) to a project. Have paint and embellishments on hand that will appeal to the guys in your group: toys, cars, maps, sports, bits of hardware—you get the picture.

**Difficulty:**  
Easy

**Time:**  
60 minutes

**Supervision:**  
Medium

**Group Size:**  
6–8 teens per  
librarian

**Mess Factor:**  
Medium



### SUPPLIES AND TOOLS

- box cutter or craft knife (for cutting cardboard)
- craft glue\*
- glue sticks with glitter
- grommet setter
- hole punch
- markers
- paintbrushes\*
- pencils\*
- rulers\*
- scissors\*
- sewing needles (large, for sewing frames together, and medium-sized, for sewing on details)
- small containers for sorting
- stamps and ink pads
- stencils or scrapbook templates

### MATERIALS

- assorted embellishments (glitter, beads, ribbon, sequins, jewels, small toys, stickers, hardware, etc.)
- binder clips
- brads
- cardboard (textured works well)
- craft foam sheets
- duct tape (assorted colors and patterns)
- embroidery floss
- fabric scrap
- felt
- grommets
- lacing (twine, ribbon, cord, yarn, etc.)
- magnets
- paint (acrylic, stencil, tempera, watercolor, etc.)
- paper clips
- paper scrap (old maps, magazines, weeded books, etc.)
- poster board

\*One for each participant



## prep work

### Getting the Project Ready

Read through the whole project and make copies of the directions to give to teens at the session. If possible, make a sample (or have one made) to display.

Cut cardboard for backings into standard frame sizes (3 by 5 inches, 4 by 6 inches, 5 by 7 inches, 2½ by 2½ inches, etc.). Cut felt backings slightly smaller than the cardboard backings. Cut additional cardboard and poster board into frame shapes in corresponding sizes. You can use stencils or scrapbook templates to cut frames into fancier shapes.

### Getting the Room Ready

Cover the worktable. Set wastebaskets around the table for easy cleanup. Put your sample finished frame on the table to inspire teens. For each participant, lay out pencil, ruler, scissors, a few paintbrushes, and glue. Other materials can be placed in the middle of the table, sorted into containers.

Before getting started, show the group your sample and explain the basics of the project. You may want to go over the instructions with the group, or give the teens a few minutes to read through the directions on their own and then answer any questions they may have.

## directions

Read all of the instructions first!

### 1 Assembling the Backing

Gather the frame, cardboard backing, felt backing, and other materials you want to use. Think about how you want your frame to hang (magnets, grommets, clips, brads, etc.).

Begin by gluing the felt to the cardboard backing; the felt side is the back of your frame [a]. If you're planning to use magnets to hang your picture, attach them now. Put the backing aside.



Gluing felt to cardboard

### 2 Covering the Frame

This is where you let your creativity take over. You can cover the entire frame in fabric, or rip up paper scraps and glue them down. You can apply glitter in strips or paint the whole frame. The possibilities are endless. After you finish this step you can either go on to step 3 and embellish your frame or skip to step 4.

### 3 Embellishing

This is your chance to polish your frame. Embellishing can add layers to the design or establish a theme for your frame. Beads, ribbon, sequins, jewels, and little toys can be glued to the frame to personalize it. Use stickers, painted stencils, duct tape, or shapes cut from craft foam. Dry brushing paint can add an aged effect. Embellish to your heart's content!



Top edge of frame glued together

### 4 Assembling the Frame

There are several ways to assemble your frame, so think about which one will work best for you.

- **Gluing/sewing option 1.** Glue *only* the top edge of the frame to the cardboard backing [b]. You can also sew the edges with embroidery floss or use lacing to thread the pieces together.
- **Gluing/sewing option 2.** Glue all edges *except* the top to the cardboard backing [c]. Again, you can use embroidery floss or lacing instead of glue; just be sure three edges are closed and you end up with a little pocket where you can slide in your picture.



Three edges of frame glued together



- **Grommets.** Place a grommet in each corner of the frame [d]. This allows for easy hanging: just thread a piece of lacing material through the grommets.
- **Paper clips or binder clips.** Use clips to hold the frame to the backing [e]. They also make great hangers!
- **Brads.** Punch holes in the corners; insert brads [f]. Tie a piece of lacing material around the brads to hang the frame.

### quick-fire version

Make up simple frames ahead of time and supply teens with easy-to-use decorating and embellishing elements. Stick with one style of frame and pre-cut, -glue, and -hole-punch as needed. Teens will still express their own style even if you limit their choices.

Provide decorating options that don't need a lot of drying time:

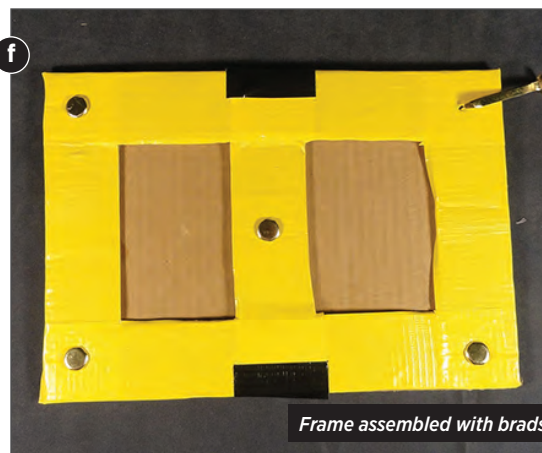
- markers
- glue sticks with glitter
- dry-brush stencil paint that dries quickly
- stamps and ink pads

Easy embellishing ideas:

- lace yarn or ribbon through holes punched in the frame
- decorate with brads
- sew simple patterns or shapes with yarn

### adaptations

With a few additional supervisors and some adjustments in materials and supplies (fewer choices and larger frames), this project can be adapted for younger children or developmentally disabled patrons. Seniors might be interested, as well; you may want to ask them to bring in some materials from home or provide more sophisticated embellishments for them to work with.



# resources

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## Books

- Blakeney, Faith, Justina Blakeney, Anka Livakovic, and Ellen Schultz. *99 Ways to Cut, Sew, Trim, and Tie Your T-shirt into Something Special*. Potter Craft, 2006.
- The Complete Photo Guide to Sewing*. Singer Sewing Reference Library. Creative Publishing, 1999.
- Easy Beading*. Better Homes and Gardens, 2004.
- Maresh, Janice Saunders. *Sewing for Dummies*. For Dummies, 2004.
- Nicolay, Megan. *Generation T: 108 Ways to Transform a T-shirt*. Workman, 2006.
- 

## Websites

- Antimony & Lace ([www.gothfashion.info](http://www.gothfashion.info))—Check the Projects tab for a list of clothing reconstruction projects that are fun for the gothic-ly inclined. Great for budding fashionistas.
- Craftster ([www.craftster.org](http://www.craftster.org))—A valuable resource for ideas with a great forum for showing off finished projects and sharing tutorials. This site also has regular contests and swaps. A great way to get into the cool crafting community, no matter what kinds of crafts you do.
- Daydreaming on Paper ([www.daydreamingonpaper.com](http://www.daydreamingonpaper.com))—A fabulous website on journaling with writing prompts and ideas on what to do with blank books.
- DIY Network ([www.DIYnetwork.com](http://www.DIYnetwork.com))—DIY and its sister station HGTV now have tons of crafter-friendly shows on the air. This site has projects for the crafty as well as more advanced projects.
- Get Crafty ([www.getcrafty.com](http://www.getcrafty.com))—More forums to share ideas, tutorials, and finished projects.
- LiveJournal ([www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com))—LiveJournal is huge with tons of communities that change on almost a daily basis, but it's worthwhile to do a search under Interests for “crafts,” “crafting,” or “crafter” to find communities that allow for showing off projects and swapping ideas.
- Stencil Revolution ([www.stencilrevolution.com](http://www.stencilrevolution.com))—Great tutorials on how to make your own stencils with various techniques, tips on materials, and a place to show off projects.