

# Art Exploration

## SOLAR PRINTS



Using construction paper and natural materials, you can use the power of the sun's rays to create your own solar prints!

### Materials Provided:

Construction Paper  
Leaf / Flower Templates

### Materials Needed:

A Sunny Day  
Natural Materials  
(leaves, stems, flowers, etc.)

## Instructions:

1. You'll need to wait for a sunny day to tackle this project. When the weather is right, begin by choosing a dark piece of construction paper for your print.
2. Find a spot outside, in your yard or driveway, where your paper can sit in direct sunlight for at least two hours (the longer, the better).
3. Lay your construction paper in your preferred spot, then add natural materials or designs on top of it. You can use the paper templates provided for you, or look for unique leaves, flowers, feathers, or other natural materials to use.



4. Once your design is complete, your project will need to develop for a few hours. If you're worried about your design moving in the breeze, you can:
  - Place small stones or rocks on top of the individual pieces; or
  - Place a clear sheet protector, or the glass backing from a picture frame, over the whole project to hold it.
5. The longer you leave your project in the sun, the better the results will be. We recommend waiting at least two hours, but you'll see even better results if you wait 4-6 hours. When you're ready to see the results, remove the objects on top of your construction paper. You should see a colorful imprint wherever they were placed.

## What's Happening?

The sun is incredibly powerful. All day long, alongside the warmth and light it sends us, the sun blasts out ultraviolet (UV) rays. These rays cannot be seen by humans, but we *can* see their effects. Have you ever sat too long on the beach, and turned a different color? Those are UV rays at work.

The same thing happens to your construction paper. Over time, the sun's UV rays break down the dye in the paper, causing it to appear bleached or faded. Except, of course, where you covered the paper with other objects! In much the same way you protect your skin from the sun by wearing sunscreen, your paper is protected from fading by the objects you placed over top it.

**Did You Know?** The Sun is more than 93 *million* miles away from us, but it is, by far, the closest star in the sky. It's light reaches us in only eight minutes.

### OPTIONAL BONUS ACTIVITY: LEAF PRINTS

Make prints using some of the leaves you find! You'll need white or light colored paper, an unpeeled crayon or piece of chalk, and a leaf.

To make a print: place your leaf under your piece of paper, and rub your pencil or chalk over top of it to create an imprint of the leaf and its veins. The harder you rub, the more detail you should see (but be careful not to move/tear your leaf!)

