

Bruce Museum Seaside Center Activity: Making Art with Seaweed!

Introduction: After last week's [Seaside Saturday](#) you and your learners are surely seaweed experts by now. If you enjoyed examining and identifying seaweed while you were at the beach, you may have been tempted to take some home. If you want to take a few pieces of seaweed with you that's ok, but make sure the seaweed is not living i.e. connected to any rocks and growing. A good way to make sure your seaweed is no longer growing is to choose seaweed that has washed up at the high tide mark. Only take a few pieces, as the dried seaweed is a food source and habitat for coastal animals.

But what should you do with seaweed once you've got it home? Follow the directions in this activity to find out how you can preserve seaweed at home. Additionally, there are several suggestions for ways to use your seaweed to create artwork.

Materials you will need: Seaweed collected at a beach, wax paper, paper towels, heavy books, watercolors, markers, colored pencils or crayons, glue, a glue brush, cardstock, air dry clay or playdough, school glue, small toys, a shoe box.

Step 1: Preserve your seaweed

Seaweed is by its very nature wet, which is the enemy of dry preservation. In order to use seaweed as part of an art project you and your learners will need to dry and preserve the seaweed you collected at the beach. When you take your seaweed home, shake off as much salt and sand as possible. On a non-porous surface place (in this order), a sheet of wax paper, a layer of paper towel, and a layer of white cardstock. Place your seaweed on top of these materials in a single layer, then add another layer of cardstock, paper towel, and a final layer of wax paper on top of the seaweed. To top this all off, place heavy books or another type of weight on your stack.



- Wax paper will keep any saltwater from leaking out and damaging surfaces.

- Paper towel will absorb moisture.
- Cardstock will provide imprints for later use.
- Heavy books will press the seaweed flat to expel water.

Step 2: Wait

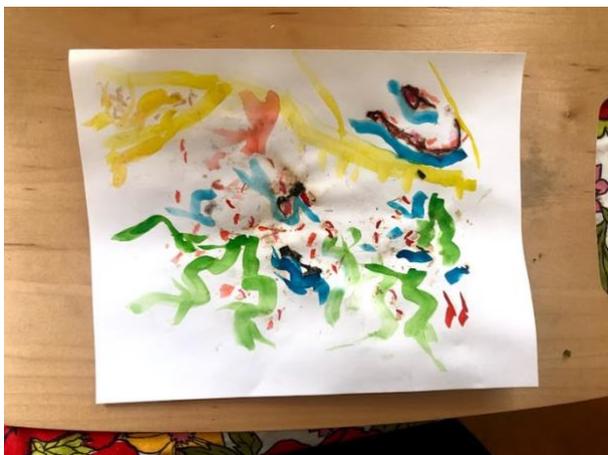
Depending on how wet your seaweed was it may take up to a week to completely dry out. Our seaweed wasn't completely dry after 4 days, but it was completely flat. Instead of leaving the seaweed between the books, where it could have gotten moldy, we laid it out in the sun for a final drying.

Step 3: Prepare your materials

Once the seaweed is completely dry, gently peel it off the paper. You will find that it leaves an imprint, or a shadow of itself, behind. This imprint can be as fun to use as a source of artistic inspiration as the seaweed itself. Small bits of seaweed may stick to your paper. Pull as gently as you can when you are releasing your pressed seaweed, but don't worry if a little bit gets left behind. Shake any loose sand off your seaweed and your paper. Look at the shapes of the dried seaweed and the seaweed imprint left behind.

Step 4: Explore your imprints

Using markers, watercolors, crayons or colored pencils, explore how filling in, outlining and working with marks of the seaweed imprint feels. We were motivated to create abstract imagery, a seaweed continent, and ocean-inspired images by our seaweed imprints. You will find that different types of seaweed leave



different behind different colors. We had the best results from rockweed and sea lettuce, which were also the most abundant when we were collecting seaweed for this project.

We liked a few of our imprint paintings so much that we decided to create a diorama. By gluing our painted imprints to the back of a shoebox, using school glue and paintbrush, we created a background. Then we glued some of our dried rockweed to our background and attached more to the foreground using small pieces of air-dry clay. Finally we added a few ocean-themed toys to round out the scene.

Can you think of other ways to use your dried seaweed or your seaweed imprints? Some things that we thought of, but haven't tried yet are:

- Hanging the seaweed from thin strings to make ornaments or a mobile.
- Laminating or coating the seaweed in clear tape to create bookmarks.
- Creating herbarium sheets with identifying information using our dried seaweeds and last week's [dichotomous key](#) as a guide.

