

Found Objects: Turning Nature Into Art

Nature has inspired artists for centuries – from the ancient Chinese elegantly illustrating Asian mountains and landscapes on scrolls to nineteenth century American painters capturing the rugged wilderness of the American West on canvas. Art does not have to just imitate nature, it can be made of nature *itself*.

What You'll Need:

- Twine or String
- Scissors
- Sticks
- Other Found Objects



The Activity:

In this activity, you will be a scientist and an artist! More specifically, you will be able to combine your scientific skills of exploration and experimentation with a sense of creativity and imagination. We welcome you to follow these instructions as you make your own **nature-made mobile!**

Step 1: Nature Walk

To begin this activity, we encourage you to take a **walk in nature**. This can be in your backyard, a local park, or even a trail. The key is find an outdoor area that has an abundance of materials for you to explore and find.

On your walk, observe your surroundings and allow yourself to walk off the beaten path. Does anything inspire you? What catches your eye? Now move your gaze downward. What objects do you see? Your goal is to collect **found objects** that you wish to include in your mobile. These may include sticks, rocks, bark, pinecones, leaves, or flowers.

Remember: When choosing objects for your mobile, only choose items that have fallen on the ground. We want to preserve those elements of nature that are still alive!

Step 2: Make the Base of Your Mobile

Once you have collected your materials, start by choosing two sturdy sticks of equal length to be the base of your mobile. Place these two sticks next to one another and use string or twine to tie a knot around them.



Step 3: Secure Your Base

After tying your sticks together, rotate one on top of the other to form an X-shape. Then wrap more string or twine around the sticks in a clockwise fashion until the sticks are secure.



Step 4: Attach Twine to Found Objects

A mobile relies upon **balance** to remain stable. Consider the weight of the objects you wish to attach to your base. Using your scientific thinking, experiment with the objects to determine which ones are equal in weight.

Tip: You may have to combine objects to match another object's weight. See examples below.



Step 5: Tie Your Objects to the Ends of Your Mobile

Using your string or twine, tie each object to the end of your sticks. Our mobile includes leaves opposite of a flower and a combination of a rock and pine cone opposite of a rock, flower, and tree bark.

Art Vocabulary

Found Object – (n) A found object is a natural or man-made object, or fragment of an object, that is found (or sometimes bought) by an artist and kept because of some important meaning the artist sees in it

Balance – (n) A principle of art and design concerned with the arrangement of one or more elements in a work of art so that they appear symmetrical (identical compositional units on either side of an axis) or asymmetrical (not identical) in design and proportion

Step 6: Trial and Error

Your mobile may not be perfect at first. Ours wasn't! It takes patience and creativity to adjust the length of each string and the weight of each object to create a balanced mobile.



When you are done with the activity, we encourage you to share your favorite images with us by tagging the Ackland Art Museum on your social media of choice!



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