

Nature Kids

Summer Shells Craft

Do you have some leftover seashells you don't want to throw away, but you just don't have the space to keep them around? Here is one way to put your treasured shells to use!

Make a Sea Shell Picture Frame

Choose a drawing or photo from the summer and make a decorative shell frame for it. Or make a frame as a gift for a friend or relative.

Materials

Cardboard or foam-core at least 2 inches bigger in each direction than the size of the picture or photo you might put in it

Shells



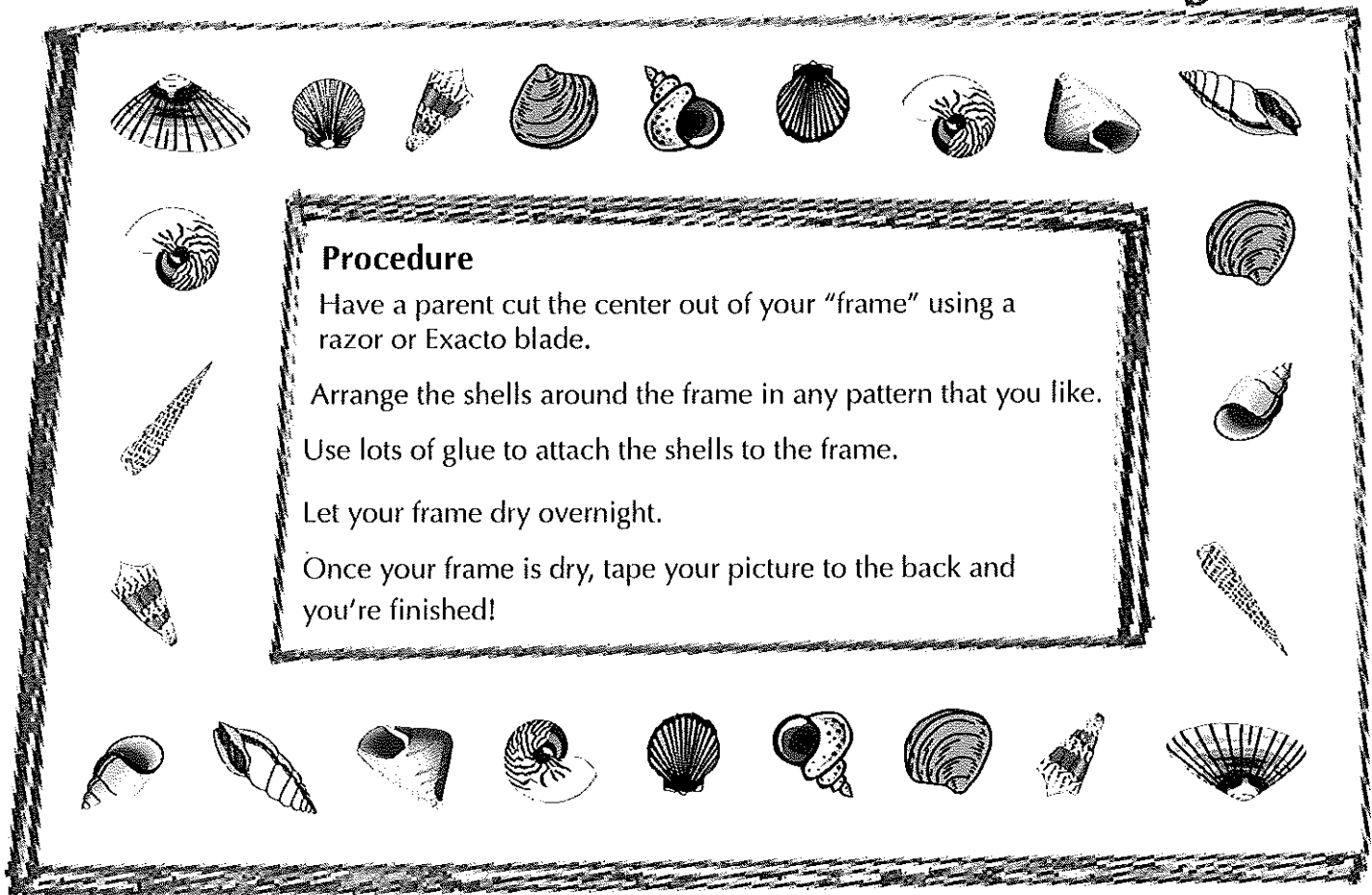
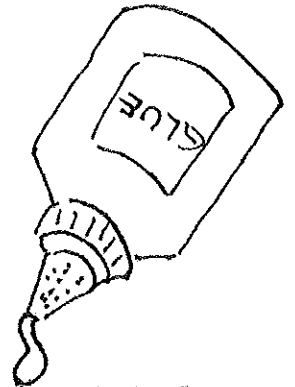
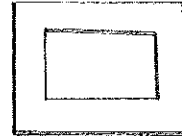
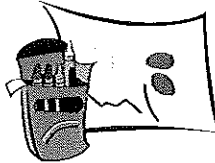
White Glue (like Elmers)



Clear tape (like Scotch tape)



A picture or photo to put in your frame



Procedure

Have a parent cut the center out of your "frame" using a razor or Exacto blade.

Arrange the shells around the frame in any pattern that you like.

Use lots of glue to attach the shells to the frame.

Let your frame dry overnight.

Once your frame is dry, tape your picture to the back and you're finished!

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Teacher's Corner

Summer Shells

Summer is over. The shell collections of the last few months are making way for new books and school clothes. But before you pack them up and put them away, take one more look....and think about the animals that created these wonders.



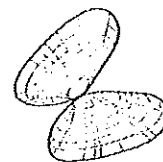
Your shell collection may have a variety of sizes and shapes- from the tiny, pink, winged coquinas, to curled, conchs and whelks to the giant clam (big enough to put your leg in). Each shell is grown by the animal that lives inside it – a **mollusk**.



Mollusks form a large and diverse phylum of animals comprising over 100,000 species - some say over 200,000 - ranging from well-know snails and clams to octopus and squid and the less well-known chitons and tusk shells. Mollusks are nearly equally divided between marine and non-marine (freshwater and land) species.

There are 6 general types of mollusks:

Bivalves or pelecypods have two valves (shell parts) connected by a hinge, a boney ligament, and one or two muscles. These include clams and mussels and scallops. (See illustration)

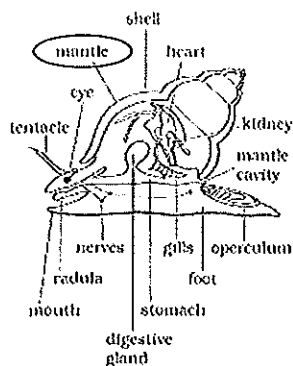


Gastropods or snails have a single shell, usually coiled. They have a distinct head with tentacles and mouth. (See snail illustration below)

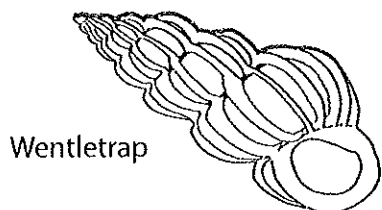
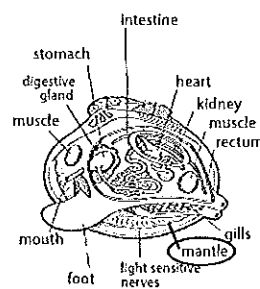
Cephalopods include the octopus, squid and nautilus. Unlike many mollusks, these are very active animals with large eyes and from 8 to 90 tentacles.

Less well-known are the **chitons**, with 8-plated shells; the tusk shells, who form a long, curved, tooth-like shell, open at both ends.

Lastly, the **monoplacophors** – formerly known only from fossils, it is a rare, deep-sea group.



Shell material, nacre, is secreted by a fold in the mantle, the outer skin lining the shell. Shells have several layers, one made up in part of calcium carbonate (CaCO_3). Mollusk blood is rich in dissolved calcium. The calcium can be concentrated out of the blood where it can crystallize as calcium carbonate and be deposited on the inner surface of the shell. This iridescent layer is known as the nacreous layer or mother of pearl. The animal enlarges its shell by depositing nacre along the leading edge near the opening. This causes the shell to become longer and wider to accommodate the growing animal inside.



Shells are very durable and usually outlast the soft-bodied animals that form them. No other animals are as widely collected, traded or bought and sold for their color, shape and design. We see in their forms a wide variety of familiar patterns and name them accordingly – like the bleeding tooth, or wentletrap (spiral staircase in Dutch). (See illustrations).

So take one last look, and think about the wondrous animal that lived and grew – in the shell you hold in your hand.

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