

OOPS! Did I forget the Free Fun.

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By Cheryl Johnson

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In my recent article "Kids Just Wanna Have Fun" I offered some ideas to keep your fun hungry kids happy. But, duhhhhh. . .I forgot the FREE FUN STUFF! Well ya' know that's the most important stuff. I don't know where my mind was that day!

So, now that I've seen the error of my ways, Let me share some more great activities we sometimes forget about as we get older. These timeless activities have been around for ages. Things that we enjoyed as kids are still fun for kids today. Even in an electronic society!

If you have kids, most likely you have a box of crayons somewhere. I hate to admit it but I still love to color! Come on, give it a try no matter how old you are. I have found that it is contagious. Even if your kids think they are "too old" for coloring, you will be surprised how quickly they join in when they see you enjoying it! Go ahead, it works every time.

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Silly putty is another fun activity that we tend to think we're "too old" for. But the older you get the more creative ideas you have and the more silly fun you can have. So come on, get your creative juices flowing.

Hey ladies, and maybe some of you gents too, do you remember paper dolls? I had almost forgotten they existed until one Christmas I came across a paper doll kit in a craft store. Suddenly, I remembered the hours and hours of fun I had playing with these simple toys. And, they are so much easier to dress than Barbie. Sorry, Barbie.

There are literally thousands of craft ideas that can keep you busy for hours or days. Crafts come in all different levels of difficulty. So find one that suits everyone in the family and work on it together. Hmmmm, could this mean more conversation time! Take advantage of these fun times together. Get to know your kids better.

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You can always choose a variety of different level crafts to suit everyone and work on different crafts all at once. Either way, you're accomplishing several things at once.....

Children learn through creating.

You'll be keeping that FUN meter up, keeping them from getting bored.

You'll be saving money on outings by finding creative ways to have fun at home.

You'll have more "Quality Time" to get to really know your kids!

Need some ideas? Just visit your local craft stores or do a search online. üCheck out

for some super ideas for having creative fun with the family. You'll find arts and crafts, party and game ideas, parenting help, recipes, and even travel ideas.

If you're into quilting, sewing, knitting, crocheting.....well if you are, you know the possibilities here. It's not just for "old folks"! Get the kids involved. There are kits created for these activities. Kits created specifically to get children interested and having fun doing these activities.

There are so many wonderful ideas for crafting the possibilities are mind blowing. One walk around your local craft store and I'll bet you can come up with a craft idea for each week of the year at least if not two or three per week! Take a pen and paper. I never trust my head to hold everything inside. Seems most of it leaks out before I get to use it if I don't write it down. There so much to take in!

Crafts for painting, sewing, candle making, transfers and art supplies that personalize items (purses, shirts, bandanas, jewelry, tote bags ..etc.), drawing, knitting, quilting, doll making, puzzles, woodworking, scrap booking.....well I could go on and on. But, best thing for you to do is get on down to that craft store and get some ideas.

You don't necessarily have to buy everything you see! **Just get ideas.** Keep a notepad of ideas and then remember to look for arts and crafts supplies in your thrift stores, consignment shops, and at yard sales.

Oh, and don't forget to recycle items you might normally trash. Keeping a good supply of these items will help keep expenses down. Things like, scraps of fabric, ribbon, paper, egg cartons, coffee cans (all sizes), Styrofoam (packing pieces or sheets) wrapping paper scraps, buttons, toilet paper and paper towel tubes. Don't throw away anything that you could possibly use in a craft project. Don't get carried away though. Never keep more than you have room to store comfortably.

Seriously people, **HAVE FUN WITH YOUR KIDS!** They won't be kids forever, and believe it or not....You **WILL** miss them when they're all grown up and out the door!

Cheryl Johnson is a mother of four, helping herself and others become and remain debt free.
Publisher of

A self-help plan for debt reduction, budgeting, frugal living, and

Oops... And How To Avoid It: Basic Miniature Painting Errors

By Ryan Ambrose

I had just bought my first box of plastic Dwarfs. I admired the expertly painted miniatures on the cover and thought: How hard could it be? I just need to do a good job. So with this in mind, I dove right in and painted my very first miniatures ever. As in right out of the box with absolutely no clue whatsoever.

The result looked something like a cross between a cheap plastic souvenir and a Kindergarten finger painting. I wasn't thrilled to say the least. But after some thought, I decided to keep the little guy and just keep trying, even though I had no clue as to what I had done wrong or how to get it right.

After a lot of practice, study, and good advice, I finally realized the things I did wrong, and if you remember to avoid them, you can bypass your own versions of the Finger-Painted Model and accelerate your journey to being an excellent painter.

Oops #1: Wrong brush for the job. Use the right brush for the job. My first miniature was done with a single, cheap general purpose brush, which is no good for things like eyes. If you are going to detail small things like eyes, use a detail brush. One size does not fit all in painting miniatures.

Oops #2: Paint was too thick This is where you get the Kindergarten look. While the miniatures come with detail, especially the Warhammer miniatures I paint, it will all disappear if your paint is too thick. Fuzzy Dwarf beards suddenly become amorphous facial bibs. Eyes become featureless blanks. Put a layer of paint on anything that's straight out of the tube, and the detail goes away.

This is also responsible for creating a gooey look to paint jobs. Unthinned paint leaves lines in thick streaks which will create a texture on flat surfaces. You can sand these flat surfaces to fix this, but for anything else you're stripping the miniatures and starting over. You can avoid this situation entirely by thinning the paint correctly and remembering that it comes in its tube, jar, or bottle far thicker than it should be applied.

Oops #3: Single layer of paint. One layer of paint is good for a basic, table grade miniature if you're painting wargaming units quickly. If you want more depth with a minimum of time and fuss you can:

1.) Put down a basecoat and drybrush. 2.) Put down a basecoat, wash with an ink, and then touch up with the same color. 3.) Put down a basecoat layer, a middle layer, and a highlight layer.

But just one layer of paint will make your miniature look flat.

Oops #4: Bottom details first. Another good way to avoid detail blunders is to paint the bottom details first. If you overpaint when painting an inner detail first, it makes no difference, because the upper surfaces have not yet been painted. Do this with eyes especially, since you can give them razor sharp lines simply by overpainting around them with an upper layer coat.

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Oops #5: Shortage of patience. Painting requires a lot of time and patience. If you just throw on a coat of paint and move on because you want the model done now, you're going to get coverage shortages, and thus a blotchy effect. I've noticed that white, yellow, orange, and red are especially unpleasant in this regard, and tend to require multiple coats.

Again, there are techniques to get decent miniatures quickly, but if you want to paint a competition or display piece, expect to expend a lot of time and patience. There's just no way around it.

Oops #6: Do your homework. A concept in general that would have helped me avoid some hard knocks with my models. Whenever starting anything new, first do your homework. You won't become an expert without practice, but at least you'll know what to practice, and that will put you well on your way.

These are general things to avoid that will keep you from straying into problems. They will also help minimize mistakes that will leave you wondering why on Earth your subject turned out the way it did.

Ryan Ambrose is the web master of The Short and Fuzzy Gallery, a miniatures painting and modeling site.



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