

Make a Sandcastle You Can Keep!

With the weather warming and summer just around the corner, trips to the beach are slowly becoming a part of the routine again. But sometimes making it to the beach as often as we would like to isn't always feasible. Here's a great craft that will bring you and your child right back to those lazy, sand-filled days at the beach, and tide you over until your next trip. With some sand and some cornstarch, your child can create her very own sand castle at home that won't wash away.

What You Need:

- Sand (about 4 cups)
- Cornstarch (about 2 cups)
- Water (about 2 cups)
- Old pot
- Stir stick
- Shells (for decorating)
- Piece of square flat cardboard
- Bowl of water

What You Do:

1. Mix the sand and cornstarch in an old pot. Make sure it's one that you won't use anymore to cook your family's meals, because the sand and cornstarch can really scratch up a good pot. (And you don't want your next chicken dish to taste like the beach!)
2. Pour the 2 cups of water into the sand and cornstarch mixture and heat on the stove over low heat. (This step may be best for grown-ups only.)
3. Keep stirring until the sand is close to the consistency of very thick mud.
4. Cool the mixture in another bowl. Lay some newspaper down in an area outside where your child will work with the sand. Keep the piece of cardboard handy for when she is ready to build her castle.
5. Once the mixture has cooled, dump it onto the newspaper outside. Make sure the mixture is completely cooled before letting your child dig in.
6. Explain to your child that she should knead the mixture in her hands until it feels like Play-doh. If the sand starts to dry out, wet her hands and let her continue to work with the mixture. (Keep a bowl of water handy for this purpose.)
7. And now the real fun begins: have your child free-form a castle onto her piece of cardboard. Talk to her about creating different forms – a square castle perhaps, or a tall and pointy one. Encourage her to use her imagination when building. And don't be afraid to make your own sand castle along with her!
8. Before the sand dries, apply shells around the castle to give it an extra, beachy touch.

