

NBSIA Member Services Safety Bulletin

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CLASSROOM ART SUPPLIES SAFETY HAZARDS



Not all art and craft products are safe for classroom use. Some products are inappropriate for children because they may contain harmful substances, such as lead, cadmium, or certain solvents. Children are at risk due to their small size and developing organ systems. They are also more likely than adults to sniff art and craft materials, put them in their mouths, or get them on their skin.

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) and the California Environmental Protection Agency have set forth these recommendations, products to avoid, safer alternatives, and a **list of materials not allowed in grades K-6.**

What to Look For on Product Labels

Art and craft products are labeled to inform users about potential hazards and safe use instructions. Federal law neither defines 'non-toxic' nor prohibits the term on art products that do not require cautionary labeling, but even these products can cause harmful effects when used in unintended ways. Read all instructions before use, and look for these phrases:

Conforms to
ASTM D-4236

Federal law requires this statement on all art and craft products to indicate the label properly informs users about potential chronic health hazards and safe use.

DANGER! **CAUTION** **WARNING**

Signal words like these indicate the product is potentially hazardous and should not be used by children. Carefully follow safety instructions, or use safer alternatives.

Use This, Not That

Although some supplies are not safe for classroom use, there are numerous alternatives.

MATERIALS TO AVOID	SAFER ALTERNATIVES
Aerosols, sprays	Liquid non-aerosol products, manual applicators
Cold water dyes, commercial dyes, powder dyes	Plant-based dyes (such as canned beets, cranberries, frozen blueberries, turmeric)
Instant papier-mâché	Papier-mâché made from newspaper and library paste or white paste (flour/starch and water)
Powdered forms of clay, glazes, paints, pigments	Moist clay, liquid non-aerosol products
Products containing lead or heavy metals (some enamels, glazes, paints)	Similar products without chronic health hazard labels, water-based markers and paints
Solvent-based products such as rubber cement, turpentine, permanent markers	Water-based glues, markers, and paints

Resources

OEHHA has a list of arts and crafts products that are not allowed to be purchased for or used in K-6 classrooms. Go to www.nbsia.org/safety-posters to view, print and post the "Art Hazards Notice" along with the "Art Smarts" poster.

Sources

<https://oehha.ca.gov/risk-assessment/document-general-info/art-and-craft-materials-schools-guidelines-purchasing-and-safe>



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