

Fun at home activity

Continuing culture: Wearable art

Inspiration

This activity is inspired by the [Encounters](#) exhibition at the National Museum of Australia. Did you know that Indigenous Australians have the world's longest continuing culture?

For thousands of years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have learnt and expressed their cultural identity in many ways including through what they wear. Check out the [burranditj \(feather skirt\)](#) or the [kaldra \(seed necklace\) on our website.](#)

Activity

Make your own piece of wearable art to adorn your head, neck, ankles or wrist, using old or new materials.

What you need

Indigenous artists use old and new materials in their artworks, sometimes using traditional methods handed down through many generations.

Natural materials they might use include bark, feathers and fur. Have a look around your house or your garden to see what you can find to make your art piece.

You might like to think about:

- What will form the base of your piece of art and what can you use to join the parts? Do you have string, plastic strapping, mesh, raffia, wool or elastic?
- What can you use for decoration? You might find natural objects such as feathers, sticks, seed pods and shells. Or you could use buttons, beads or small toys. Think about how the materials hang and move when joined together.
- You might also need scissors, glue or a needle and thread. Ask an adult for help, as this can be dangerous.



Steps

1. Gather your materials and lay them in front of you. Move your materials around to see what works well together. Will you wear your artwork around your neck, wrist or ankle, on your head or another part of your body?
2. Think about the lengths of string you need for your piece. If you are making a necklace, measure the string loosely around your neck, work out how long or short you would like it, and then cut to size.
3. Attach the decorative pieces by tying, sewing, gluing or weaving. Experiment and use your imagination!

Sample necklace

For our necklace, we tied a scrap of possum fur to netting, using string. This fur was from New Zealand because possums are protected species in Australia. You could use fake fur or fabric. The netting allows you to attach or weave in extra adornments.



Sample arm cuff

For our arm cuff, we laced up a piece of green mesh with elastic, to be worn under the wrist.

We attached feathers to our arm cuff after tying them in bunches with string.

We also used seed pods grown and donated by the [Australian National Botanic Gardens](http://www.anbg.gov.au), but you can look around your garden and see what you can find!



Share your creation! Make a few different wearable artworks and experiment with the materials you use. Share your creation with us by sending a photo or video to: schoolholidays@nma.gov.au and check out more fun at home activities, videos and games on the [Museum's website](http://www.nma.gov.au).