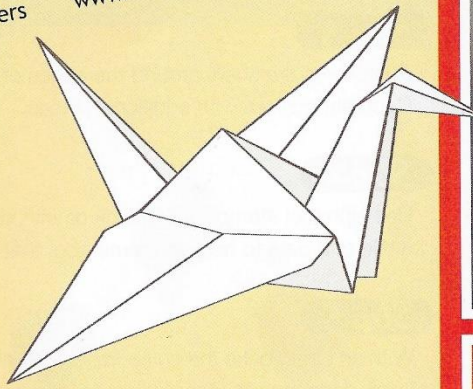


Origami in Education

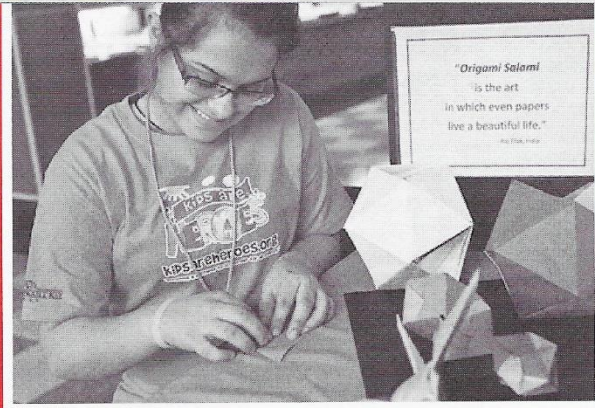
By Dana Hinders www.origami.about.com



The act of folding paper might not seem very educational. However, doing origami with your kids is a great way to help them build the skills they need to excel in the classroom. Because origami involves transforming a flat sheet of paper into a 3D object, it helps children develop the foundation they need to better understand science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education in high school and in college. This is important because STEM careers are expected to be among the best paying and fastest growing occupations in the next decade or two.

Origami also teaches children about patience, persistence and creativity. They learn that making mistakes is part of the process of mastering a new skill. Sometimes, mistakes in origami can even lead to happy discoveries. For example, an origami cat can become an origami fox just by varying a few of the folds. Seeing this artistic component of origami helps children learn that science and math don't have to be dry or boring school subjects.

Although some origami models are very complex, there are plenty of simple models that you can use to teach young children. Lessons for toddlers and preschoolers focus on basic ideas like



identifying shapes and colors, but this knowledge provides the building blocks needed for future study. Linda Stephen, an origami artist who has had her work exhibited throughout the United States and Japan, began teaching her daughter origami when she was just three years old. "Origami builds spatial sense and an understanding of symmetry, skills vital to the development of intuitive thought," Linda says. "I volunteer to teach origami about once a year in my children's classrooms. I

always make sure to emphasize math and geometry concepts for that grade and age level. For preschool children, I emphasize folding a square in half into a triangle. For older children, I emphasize the line of symmetry or that many origami patterns are symmetrical — the same on both sides."

Eleven year old Owen Bryne has been practicing origami for three years and feels strongly that his interest in origami has made him a better student. "I feel that folding origami has helped me to understand math better," he explains. "Origami has helped me to understand fractions and geometrical shapes, but most of all, it has helped me to follow and to understand directions more clearly."

Origami is often thought of as a solitary hobby, but children who love origami often find that it provides a positive way for them to connect with their peers. Cynde Frederick's daughter, 16 year old Calista Frederick-Jaskiewicz, used her youthful passion of paper folding to form a global network of kids who use origami to deepen their understanding of STEM subjects and to become leaders in their community. Origami Salami now has 12 chapters of young paper folders in the United States, Australia and the Philippines. "To make it happen, she learned how to use social media, how to communicate more clearly, how to lead by example, the value of extensive research, how to take personal risk in order to advance her programs and accept failure when others did not share her passion, and how to keep going anyway!" Fredrick says.

Visit the "Origami for Kids" section of About Origami at www.origami.about.com for photo tutorials appropriate for children ages 5 and up. See the Origami Salami webpage at www.origamisalami.com to learn more about how your child can become involved in this exciting online community of young paper folders.

