

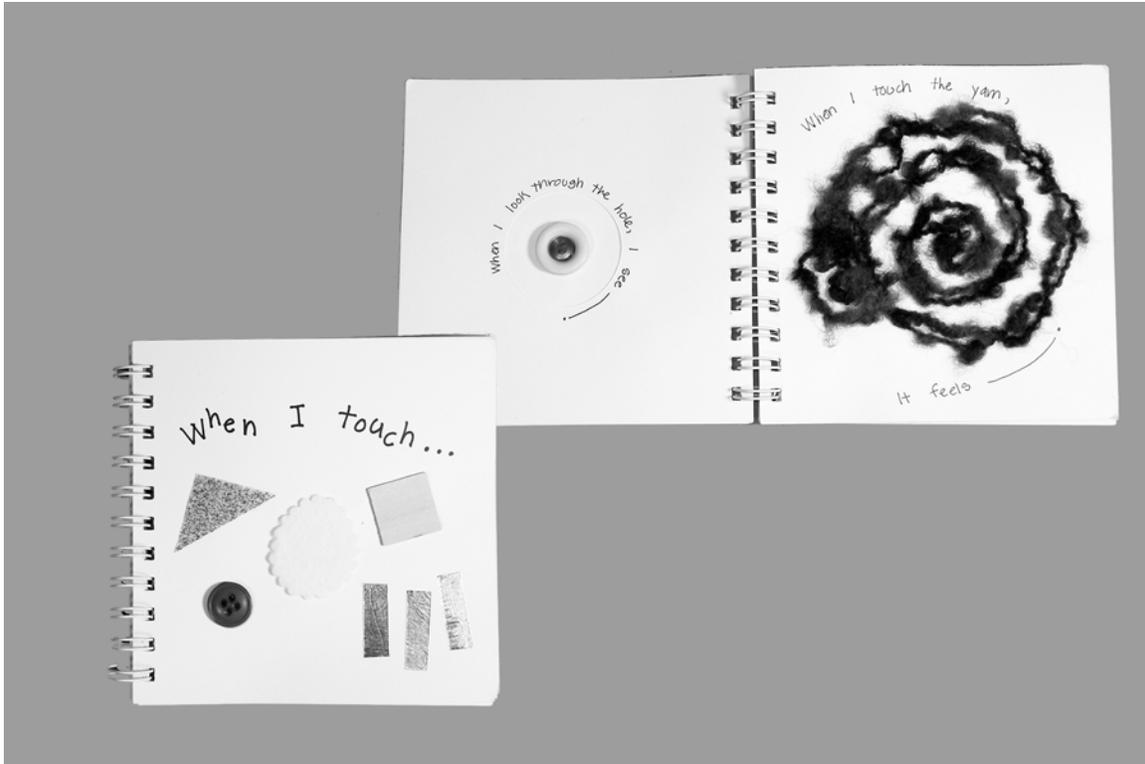
Bookmaking with Teen Parents

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Teaching teen parents to make individualized books for their children can benefit the entire family. Parents gain insight into how books work and develop a deeper connection to books by making them personal. The children receive a special book created just for them by their parent(s), allowing the parent and child to share a literacy-rich experience. In order to achieve a successful bookmaking activity, it is important to remember that some teen parents may have never looked at a picture book from the perspective of understanding its layout and structure. They may not know how to proceed if the instructions are simply, “Make a book!” Presenting ideas for thematic structures is a good place to begin. Showing the group published books as examples helps them to generate ideas and exposes them to more quality children’s literature. It is important that the examples are simple, and have an easily transferable concept. Books with a repetitive structure are the easiest to use. Consider sharing the following types of books as examples before the bookmaking activity.

- 1) Counting books - 1 dog, 2 cats, 3 birds, etc. Counting books are quick to make with stickers.
- 2) Shape books - Use pre-cut paper shapes or stickers to make circles, squares, triangles, etc. Shapes can also be combined to make recognizable objects, as seen in *Changes, Changes* by Pat Hutchins.
- 3) Color books - What better example could there be than *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin?

- 4) Nursery rhymes or songs for text - Examples are *Big Fat Hen* by Ken Baker and Rosemary Wells' version of *Bingo!* or *1, 2, Buckle My Shoe* by Anna Grossnickle Hines.
- 5) Days of the week, months of the year, or hours of the day - *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle is a classic example.
- 6) A simplified alphabet book – Make it easy by spelling out the letters of the child's name. Example: "A is for apple," "N is for nickel," "T is for toe," "H is for house," "O is for orange," "N is for nut," "Y is for yogurt." "Put them all together and they spell "ANTHONY!"
- 7) Favorite things - Include the child's favorite color, animal, food, place, toy, people, etc.
- 8) Repeated, patterned text- Use a repeated phrase as demonstrated in perennial favorites like *I Went Walking* by Sue Williams, *This Is My Hair* by Todd Parr, and *The Very Busy Spider* by Eric Carle.
- 9) Lift-the-flap books – Use pre-cut pieces of felt slightly smaller than the book page size for flaps. They are attached with colored duct tape to the pages. This works well for repeated and patterned text, like variants on *Brown Bear*, *Brown Bear*, such as "(Child's name), what do you see?" or *Where's Spot?*
- 10) Texture books - These provide opportunities for the use of expressive language. Gather textured fabrics (velvet, burlap, corduroy, and fur), fuzzy yarns, cotton balls, shapes cut from wood and foam, foil, and cellophane.



A handmade texture book. Photograph by Hal Jerman.

Bookmaking Format and Materials

The bookmaking process involves multiple steps, including creating the physical book, writing the story, and executing artwork and text. It is therefore important to offer ideas that are simple and directions that are easy to follow. To avoid overwhelming participants, book length should be no more than ten to twelve pages. The size of the actual book should be relatively petite, such as 5 ½-inch by 8 ½-inch, so that it is easier to complete and more manageable for handling by children. Introduce the process by using a picture book to explain the conventions of the book format, including the cover with author and illustrator's names, title page with copyright date, and dedication. Show examples of some of the different story formats discussed above. Always encourage creativity; if teen parents want to follow their own format, it is more than okay!

Making a Blank Book

There are a variety of ideas on how to make the physical book in very simple ways. An excellent web resource is Susan Kapuscinski Gaylord's website, MakingBooks with Children. In the "Free Activities" pages, there are instructions for making nine different book formats using only computer printer paper and a few other supplies. For example, the "stick and elastic book" can be folded, punched, and secured in minutes. The MakingBooks with Children website links to another creative website, Art Junction: a Collaborative Art Space for Teachers and Students, which provides instructions for making a book from a paper grocery bag. Other ideas include:

- From *Creating Handmade Books* (Golden 1998) - "Simple Accordion" book, "Fan Book," and "Concertina with Tabs."
- From *The Kids' Guide to Making Scrapbooks and Photo Albums* (Check 2002) - "Hole Punch Design."
- From *Totally Cool Journals, Notebooks and Diaries* (Pensiero 2003) - "Basic Book #2," "Birthday Books," and "Cookie Cutter Books."
- From *Paper-Folding Fun! 50 Awesome Crafts to Weave, Twist and Curl* (Johnson 2002) - "Accordion-Fold Book with Pockets," and "Color Magic Flip-Flop."

Purchasing Blank Books

Short blank books are available to purchase on several websites. The greatest variety of choices is found on teacher resource websites. Look for books that have a minimal number of pages; no more than sixteen pages are optimal. Prices range from \$1

to \$3, depending on size, paper quality, and length. Here are some examples of websites where you can purchase blank books:

- From the Teachers Paradise website: A sixteen page 7-inch by 10-inch book.
- From the Rainbow Resource Center website: “Bright Ideas” blank storybooks, 6-inch by 9-inch books with sixteen pages and heavy tag board covers. Smaller books, 4 ¼-inch by 5 ½-inch, are also available.
- From the BookBlanks website: “Chunky Board Books,” available in ten pages, 5-inch by 5-inch size, 8-inch by 8-inch, and 6-inch by 6-inch with twenty-eight pages with hardcovers.
- The Klutz Press website sells “Klutz Build a Book” kits; with ten-page wire bound books come in two sizes, 4-inch by 4-inch and 7-inch by 7-inch. The kits include foam shapes, googly eyes, and patterned papers.

Book Illustrating Materials

Tools:

- colored markers
- crayons
- glue sticks
- paper scissors
- pencils
- rulers
- stencils (optional)
- white glue (for foam pieces or textured materials)

Decorating materials (No need to have everything; just provide a selection):

- colored papers
- gift wrap
- magazines with photographs of animals or everyday items
- movable eyes
- origami paper
- personal photographs of the child and family
- recycled greeting cards
- scrapbooking paper
- stickers
- textured materials (see texture books, above)
- tissue paper
- yarn and ribbon

Illustration and Layout Tips

- 1) Cut papers into smaller pieces to avoid waste (about the size of your book pages).
- 2) Ask that when cutting paper or fabric, cut shapes close to the edge, rather than cutting one shape out of the center and discarding the rest.
- 3) To prevent mistakes, suggest writing each page's text on a strip (or more) of paper that can be moved around on the page before being glued down for the best fit with the illustrations.
- 4) If there is any interest, use simple collages of colored shapes or examples from picture books to illustrate these basic visual principles: objects that are

lower on the page appear larger, objects that are smaller appear further away, especially when also placed higher on the page, overlapping objects creates depth, a light colored object will appear bigger than a dark object of the same size.



A handmade lift-the-flap book. Photograph by Hal Jerman.