

Less-Mess Rock Painting

by Eve Hart for Washington Rock Quarries, Inc.



Supply List

- bucket of river rocks
- spray paint in color(s) of your choice
- kid scissors
- craft glue and/or hot glue
- washi tape (solid colors and/or patterns)
- felt squares
- pipe cleaners
- googly eyes
- pompoms
- black and metallic Sharpies
- wax paper
- baby wipes for sticky hands

Instructions

1. Find River Rocks

Where can you find river rocks? I picked river rocks — also known as “streambed cobbles” — in all shapes, colors, and sizes at Washington Rock’s King Creek Pit in Orting, WA. The kookier the shape, the more creative the characters!

If Washington Rock is too far and you’re stumped about where to find river rocks, try googling “landscape supply near me” or “river rocks near me.”

2. Clean Your Rocks

Not sure how to clean rocks? I filled my bucket of river rocks with water and a little dish soap, then shook the bucket a couple of times to try to loosen the dirt. I used a scrub brush to get dirt out of crevices, then rinsed each rock off.



The rocks don't need to be perfectly clean, but it's important to remove as much dirt as possible to get the paint to stick.

3. Dry Rocks Completely

Towel dry your river rocks. Then let them air dry completely. When one side is dry, turn the rocks over to ensure the other side also dries completely.

To speed up the drying process, I put damp river rocks on old sheet pans (not mom's nice ones!) and dried them in the oven at 450° Fahrenheit for about 30 minutes. Then I removed the trays with hot pads and set them on the counter to cool.



CAUTION! Some rocks can explode when heated. Avoid working with materials like sandstone, limestone, or pumice. Do not use rocks that have been submerged in water for long periods of time, such as rocks found in rivers or lakes.

4. Spray Paint Rocks with Any Color of Your Choice

This is where the rock painting happens! I chose four colors from the Rust-Oleum line to match the event color scheme: key lime, magenta, oasis blue, and grape. You can choose any colors you like.

I placed cardboard out in my driveway. Then I laid out all of the river rocks on top of the cardboard, making sure to leave space around each rock. I sprayed one section at a time with one color of spray paint. I allowed some sections to overlap so that some rocks had a cool multi-color look.

After letting the rocks dry for about an hour, I turned them all upside down and spray painted the other side. Some rocks were oddly shaped and needed to be turned at different angles for paint touch-ups.



After the paint was dry, I carefully placed the rocks in buckets for transport to the event. Note that paint can (and will!) rub off onto other surfaces or other rocks unless you pack each rock separately.

5. Decorate Rocks

At the event, I set up two tables and covered them with tablecloths. The supplies were divided among several plastic cups, and the cups were placed at either end of each table. That way, anyone could reach the supplies they wanted.



At the event, some kids made many-eyed monsters with googly eyes while others colored their rocks with metallic markers. Some created felt clothing while other kids glued pipe-cleaner wings or antennae onto their creations. There really is no limit to the kinds of characters kids can create.

6. Set Rock Creations Aside to Dry

This is where the wax paper comes in. If a child needs more time to let their creation dry, place the decorated rock on a piece of wax paper and write the child's name on the paper. The wax will help prevent the character from sticking to the paper.



7. Capture the Moment

A 1,000-pound version of The Rock, our children's mascot, made an appearance at Dozer Day. Children could take pictures of their decorated rock characters in front of The Rock, and parents could include the hashtag #WARock on pictures posted to social media.

Check out our rock decorating videos below from Lake Kapowsin Day and Dozer Day.

[Lake Kapowsin Day Rock Decorating Video](#)

[Dozer Day Rock Decorating Video](#)

Need rocks for painting? Washington Rock sells river rocks. Check out our River Rock page. You can also contact us if you're interested in handpicking river rocks. Washington Rock is located in the Puget Sound region of Washington State.