

# The Arts

*I am always doing that which I cannot do, in order that I may learn how to do it.*

– Pablo Picasso  
Spanish artist

Let's start the list of *50 Essential Experiences* with **The Arts**.

In a perfect world, the school your child attends would provide her or him with a well-rounded education that includes a liberal-arts curriculum. But most schools today are cutting back to the bone. And more than likely, the first subjects to be cut are the Arts.

In other sections, of this book, there will be *Essential Experiences* on Music and Art related topics – mostly knowledge based activities. This section, however, covers some hands-on undertakings that will provide your children with essential skills, knowledge and understanding.

I hope you will agree that The Arts provide experiences and skills that can be extremely useful in your child's adult life.

# 1. *Discover Architecture*

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- Skills**
- Knowledge**
- Careers**
- Pop. Culture / History**
- Social Interaction**

*Never be afraid to try something new. Remember, amateurs built the ark. Professionals built the Titanic.*

– Author Unknown

**Discover Architecture** may seem like a very odd subject to be placed first in a list of *50 Essential Experiences* that your sons and daughters should undertake.

One reason I chose it to be first is that it comes close to being first alphabetically, but more importantly it will provide them with a host of collateral experiences and

a multitude of skills that can be used in dozens of professions.

If you have access to architectural drawings, or can even have your children visit an architect's office that is great, but not necessary. However, this is an activity where your parental mentoring skills will be needed. Your children will definitely need guidance for this one.

Start by asking your children to draw a picture of your home. They will probably create a picture of what it looks like from the street. Then ask them to draw a picture of the side or the back. Now ask them to draw a picture of your house from above. And don't let them forget to include the front and back yards

The idea of a floor plan, drawing to scale, and a topographical map are pretty abstract and advanced concepts. It really makes your children use their imaginations, help them to understand 3-dimensional space and become aware of spatial relationships.

Have them come up with their own designs and create their own dream house. Then compare their drawings to floor plans found in the real estate section of the newspaper. They can even create models of their designs (which are a whole other set of skills).

Collateral experiences will have them learning how to take measurements, use a scale ruler, practice their drawing and drafting skills and, possibly, get involved with model making.

This activity is not for the youngest of your sons and daughters. They do need to have some other basic skills and the ability to deal with abstract ideas. But it can be a really fun family project as well as one of the *50 Essential Experiences*.

## ***2. Learn to Draw***

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- Skills**
- Knowledge**
- Careers**
- Pop. Culture / History**
- Social Interaction**

*Life is the art of drawing without an eraser.*

– John W. Gardner  
American writer and Secretary of Health,  
Education and Welfare

**Learn to Draw** is at the top of my list of the three things that I really wish I had experienced when I was younger. I really think that it would have had a profound effect on my life and opened up a world of options. (You'll have to read the rest of this book to find out what the other two are.)

I don't mean to be cynical (well, maybe I do), but I have discovered that most people simply have no imagination. I can't tell you how many times I've tried to explain something in words when a picture was what I needed. A picture is, without a doubt, worth much more than a thousand words.

For instance, a motion picture may start with a script (words on a piece of paper) but it cannot be filmed until a picture of every shot (a storyboard consisting of hundred or thousands of drawings) has been made so that everyone knows what it's supposed to look like.

All product designs, their bottles, boxes, and containers, start with a simple drawing.

And drawing is a little more complicated than just using a pencil. There are different mediums available to the budding artist: Pencil, ink, charcoal, pastels, acrylics, and oil paints to name a few. Each requires its own set of skills and hours and hours of practice – remember the 10,000 Hour Rule.

Being able to draw is also another way for your children to communicate and express themselves.

Their skills may progress to cartooning or drawing portraits. If they advance to drawing portraits then they may also have to learn to interact with others.

A bunch of collateral experiences here and, if your children get good at it, a lot more opportunities and possibilities in their future.

### ***3. Try Creative Writing***

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- Skills**
- Knowledge**
- Careers**
- Pop. Culture / History**
- Social Interaction**

*I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.*

– Albert Einstein  
Jewish, German-Swiss-Austrian-American  
physicist

Being able to speak well is a very important skill for your children to have (we will definitely get to that later), but knowing how to communicate in writing is maybe even more so.

In whatever profession they wind up in as adults, if your sons and daughters sit at a desk, they will have to write: Business reports, letters, memos, emails, articles, technical writing or even scientific papers.

Having the experience of knowing how to write creatively will definitely help your children when they have to write in a non-fiction, business-related way.

Your sons and daughters should **Try Creative Writing** because it will teach them how to develop ideas and sharpen their abilities to clearly express their thoughts. It will help them to exercise their imaginations, increase their vocabulary, and learn grammar.

Creative writing can, theoretically, be considered any writing, whatsoever, of original conception. And it doesn't have to be lengthy. Short stories, anecdotes, amusing stories, poetry, song lyrics, one-act plays, and essays are all long enough.

Challenge your children to write creatively. Give them fun projects to be shared with family and friends. Encourage them to create.

(By the way – When I use the term “Creative Writing” I am not talking about the forged notes to “Please excuse Johnny from school today.”)

## 4. *Go to an Art Museum*

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- Skills
- Knowledge
- Careers
- Pop. Culture / History
- Social Interaction

*Life is a succession of lessons  
which must be lived to be  
understood.*

– Helen Keller  
American author and educator who was  
blind and deaf

Man's expression of creativity has taken many forms. (Notice I did not use the word "beauty" because Art does not have to be beautiful.) When your children **Go to an Art Museum** they will see some of those expressions of creativity.

There are many types of Art: Paintings, drawings, sculpture, and crafts. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (in New York City) has medieval suits of armor and musical instruments. Heck, they even have an entire ancient Egyptian temple.

And Art can have many forms: Modern, Realistic, Abstract, Naturalistic, and Pop to name a few.

Your sons and daughters should learn to appreciate that creativity comes in all shapes and sizes. Some pieces of art are really big and some are surprisingly small. The Mona Lisa, for example, is only about 31 by 21 inches.

If your family is lucky enough to live in or visit a big city, it will probably have an Art Museum. Even Las Vegas has art museums – most of them are inside casinos and privately owned but they are still art museums with unique, individual pieces of art.

Art, by its definition is unique. There is only one original of each piece and they only exist in one place. So, if your children get to travel, wherever they go, always make sure they visit the local art museums.

Sure, they can see pictures of artwork in books, but it's nothing like seeing the originals in person.