



## Heart Shaped Rice Hand Warmer Valentines

by Jenni Burks

One thing I try to prioritize when deciding what crafts to do with my children is the usefulness of the craft.

As cute and easy as little foam shapes are, adorned with pom-poms, glitter, and sequins, they often end up adding more to our clutter problem than to our life.

So when the time comes to create something for ourselves or for someone, I always try to make sure the end result will be useful in some way.

This winter, Bear was part of a weekly outdoor parent-child toddler class. (Which was *amazing*, by the way. Loved it *so* much!) The final winter class landed on Valentine's Day and we ended with a celebration and gift exchange.

We were asked to bring homemade gifts that did not feature commercial characters. Examples of past gifts included everything from greeting cards to candles.

I thought about just making some kind of card. There are so many creative options to go with there.



HEART-SHAPED  
RICE HAND WARMER  
VALENTINES

MAMA *Rhythm*

**Then the idea for hand-warmers hit me.**

You know, the kind you warm up in the microwave and stick in your pockets or gloves to keep your hands toasty. (What some of us wished we had a few of the more frigid January class sessions!)

And, of course, for Valentine's Day, we'd make them heart-shaped!

There were only 5 children enrolled in the class, so it wouldn't be an unrealistically long project. We also already had almost everything we needed on hand.

## For this project you'll need:

- **Felt in colors of your choice (we used pink, red, and burgundy)**
- **1 piece of card stock**
- **fabric paint or acrylic paint**
- **A sewing machine – OR a quilting needle, if you're hand-sewing (It's a great starter sewing project for kids 5 and up!)**
- **thread in a color of your choice**
- **plain, dry rice (we used Jasmine because it's what I keep around)**

## To make the felt hand-warmers:

1. On the card stock, draw a template for the shape you want to make. A good size for each hand warmer is about 4 inches across. Once you're happy with it, cut out your shape.
2. Trace the shape onto the felt, and cut it out. Cut 2 shapes for each hand warmer you want to make.
3. Lay down some paper to protect your table. Put a smock or apron on your child, if desired. Allow your child to paint the front of half of the felt cutouts. Allow to dry thoroughly. (Good time for a break – we didn't move on to the next step until the following morning.)
4. Place one of the painted shapes on top of one of the plain ones, with the painted side on the outside. Sew around the shape, about 1/3" from the edges, leaving a 2" opening somewhere on the perimeter. Repeat with the remaining felt until all your pieces are sewn in to pouches.
5. One at a time, fill each pouch with rice (so it's full, but not so stuffed you can't close the opening), pinch the opening closed, pin if needed, and sew the opening shut.



To include Bear (who won't be 3 until April) in the pouch-filling I put more rice than we needed into a little bin, and supplied her with measuring spoons and a little pitcher. (I would have offered her our

chocolate funnel if could have found it.) I then showed her how to spoon rice into each heart pouch. She spent a long time happily filling the heart pouches and playing with the rice while I adjusted the amount of filling and sewed them shut.

This is as close to a sensory bin as I'll get. There's **no way** two of her older brothers would have **ever** sat and filled those pouches at her age. At least, not without pelting someone with rice or shoving rice up their noses or something. Gauge your child's level of involvement based on your child's particular strengths, abilities, interests, and needs.

Once the pouches were sewn, we packaged 2 per child in sandwich bags with little printouts of instructions for use.



We were told to only make tags say "from:" and not "to:" to make distribution easier.

***This is brilliant, y'all.*** Definitely a trick I'm going to remember.

Whether they use them as hand warmers or bean bags, these are a quick, fun project that the kids really seemed to enjoy.

Anyone else have a favorite Valentine's Day DIY gift?? Feel free to share in the comments!

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