



Get
Crafty

Creating for Family Pets

Whether you make crafts as gifts for family and friends or you are the CEO of a personal crafts business, pets may be part of your target market.

Why? With more than 67% of American families owning at least one pet, there are a lot of animals out there that have become important companions to their owners.

According to Statista.com:

- The average U.S. household spends around \$500 a year on their pets.
- A wealthier U.S. household spends closer to \$1,523 each year on their pets.
- About \$30.2 billion was spent on vet care and pet products in 2019.
- In February, 14% of survey respondents said they acquired a new pet — which is up from 10% in December 2020.

That's a lot of money going to pets.

Which isn't to say all pet toys are going to sell well or be popular.

MARKET RESEARCH

The site A Better Lemonade Stand says it is imperative that you do your homework before creating a lot of pet toys and accessories that you think will sell.

They make the following suggestions:

- Read pet magazines and



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pet-related blogs. They'll give you hints as to what is popular and what is not.

- Watch for pictures of celebrities with their pets.
- Visit Google Trends and search for phrases like “pet

toys” or “pet products” or the specific object you want to make.

- Conduct competitor research and product research to make sure your idea is unique.

TYPES OF PET PRODUCTS

Head over to Pinterest or Instagram and do a search on pet toys or pet products and you'll get more inspiration than you can ever act upon in a lifetime.

The Animal Humane Society said it welcomes donations of such things as cat toys, dog toys, outdoor shelters for cats, snuffle mats for cats and dogs and snuffle balls for dogs.

Other products you could create include pet collars and leashes, pet beds, pet accessories, pet clothes, pet food, anti-flea shampoo, natural cleaning solutions, pet tags, pet blankets or even gifts designed for pet lovers. And it isn't just dogs and cats you can make things for.

Other options include decorative items for fish tanks, the actual fish tanks, bird suet recipes and mazes for hamsters, gerbils or rats.

PET FOOD

While a pet's main diet is likely to be food bought from the major manufacturers, there are lots of homemade treats that you can make for animal companions. Take a stroll through a craft fair and you're likely to see several booths of people selling their homemade pet food concoctions.

Martha Stewart's website suggests such things as pumpkin dog biscuits, paw-print cookies, cooling banana Popsicles and a pupcake topped with peanut butter frosting.

Do your research so you don't include ingredients that are dangerous to the type of pet you are making the treat for. Reach out to your local veterinarian and review your ingredients — and then be sure to gift them with some of the treats from your first batch.



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Crafting with Air-Dry Clay

For as long as people have needed bowls and cups, people have engaged in the art of pottery. However, for some people today, pottery has some hefty entry barriers.

Traditional pottery requires equipment and time. It needs spinning wheels, kilns, glaze, tools and lots of space for the pieces to move through each of the stages.

This is why pottery made with air-dry clay has become a popular craft in recent years. It allows potters to make things in their homes. It dries at room temperature, usually within 24 hours.

TYPES OF AIR-DRY CLAY

There are several varieties of air-dry clay and each has different ingredients, textures, dry time and final strength. The one you choose will be based on your preference and what you want for the final project. The most common sub-types are paper-based, earthen and epoxy two-part mixed-base. Bob Vila,

the host of many home improvement television shows, defines each of these:

Paper-based: Starting with clay, it is mixed with processed paper that reduces a project's weight, improves joining capabilities and decreases warping.

Earthen: The most common type of clay, it is made of natural clay containing iron and other minerals. It is a pliable, nontoxic clay.

Epoxy two-part mixed-base: This clay comes as a resin and a hardener that must be mixed thoroughly to set and dry properly. It dries quickly and takes up to two hours to harden.

BENEFITS TO AIR-DRY CLAY

Sculptor Susie Benes has worked with many different mediums and on her website, she talks about some of the

advantages to using air-dry clay. These include:

- No special tools or equipment (such as kilns) are needed.
- Most air-dry clays are non-toxic.
- Clay can be layered and imperfections and cracks fixed even after the clay has dried.
- Air-dry clay can use internal armatures, allowing for unique structures.
- It has the consistency of soft wood and is more likely to dent than break.
- Air-dry clay can be combined with other materials from the beginning.

DOWNSIDES TO WORKING WITH AIR-DRY CLAY

While air-dry clay is very flexible and many potters and artists enjoy working with it, there are some disadvantages too:

- It can be fragile and thin additions have a tendency to break off.
- It needs sealing and is prone to cracking.
- Most air-dry clays are not food safe

so they are for decorative purposes only.

- Air-dry clays are flammable.
- They are not waterproof.
- It can take longer to finish a project.
- It shrinks when drying.

AIR-DRY CLAY CRAFT IDEAS

Some fine artists use air-dry clay to create intricate sculptures of the sort that couldn't be created with traditional ceramic methods. However, there are many projects a person can create with air-dry clay, some so simple that even young children can make them.

Spruce Crafts lists several projects for people of all experience levels who want to work with air-dry clay. They include stamped clay decorative plates, clay leaf bowls, tropical themed plates, a clay necklace, mini-planters, faux cookies and biscuits for kids to play with, mid-Century Modern hand dishes, hanging lamps, clay circle garland and clay and rope pot. Instructions for each project are on their website.

One of the World's Oldest Crafts

Beading continues to be a popular craft, perhaps in part due to its versatility.

It is a craft that young children can engage in as well as fine artists. It ranges from the very simple to the very complex.

HISTORY

Beading has been around for a long time — some even say it might be the oldest art form there is. Archaeologists have found evidence of beading dating back to 38,000 BC — the age of the Neanderthal man.

Nearly every culture we are aware of have used beads in some form or another, whether for art, prayer, status symbols or a form of currency and barter. There is almost no limit to the materials used to create beads, including plant seeds, bones, gems, stones, clay, glass, wood, amber, plastic and metals, among others.

Teeda, a wholesaler of sterling silver jewelry, reports that until 1480, all beads were hand crafted. It was in that year that beads first began to be mass produced in India.

WHAT TO MAKE

Jewelry is still the most popular form of beadwork, but bead-ers make more than just earrings, necklaces, pins and bracelets. Beads are used to make bookmarks, ornaments, garlands, keychains, and wreaths. You can make flowers or toys for older children out of



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beads.

Beading can dress up household items such as tablecloths, lamp shades, comforters or curtains. Beadwork lends itself to season-specific and holiday crafts as well.

CHOOSING BEADS AND WIRE

Beaders put in a lot of care into choosing what beads they are going to use and what wire will work best for their projects.

Halcraft Collection suggests the following factors to consider when choosing beads:

- Type of project you are

going to create.

- Cultural influences.
- Finding a focal point.
- Sizing your beads.
- The aesthetics, durability and vibes of the bead.
- Color coordination.
- Working with what you love.

While beading wire is often unseen, it will make the difference in a project's durability and affect how you make a given project. Beading wire is a strand made up of multiple, thin steel wires that are woven or wound together. They might be coated with a thin layer of nylon.

Spruce Crafts says the keys to picking great beading wire comes in understanding basic terminology such as beading wire measurements (diameter, number of strands) and pound test strength.

SHAPE AND COLOR

There is almost no limit to what beads can look like. While most today are mass produced there are still people creating hand-crafted beads.

Some of the basic shape classifications, according to mini-art-crafts.com, are:

- Cylindrical beads.

- Round, slightly flattened, beads.

- Three-sided beads.
- Triangular beads.
- Hexagonal beads.
- Drop beads.

Color classifications involve more than just what shade or hue a bead is. They also refer to transparency/opaqueness and where the beads are painted. Some beads are made with transparent glass and painted on the inside while others are painted on the outside. Some beads are slightly tinted while multi-colored beads might be striped, bicolored or spotted.

Creative Crochet Projects

Crochet has the ability to create designs unique to its method, from granny squares to intricate lacework.

Crochet is “a handicraft in which yarn is made up into a patterned fabric by looping yarn with a hooked needle,” according to Oxford Languages. That is merely a foundational definition — the art is much more complex than that.

It has seen a rise in popularity in recent years with searches for “crochet kits” on the Hobbycraft website increasing by 27% in 2021. It also helps that social media is now filled with how-to tutorials and sharing such images as Tom Daley crocheting in the stands during the Olympics.

HISTORY OF CROCHET

Younger than knitting, embroidery and weaving, scholars differ on when crochet got its start.

The Crochet Guild of America quotes several researchers. Annie Porter, an American crochet expert, dates the craft back to the 16th century when crochet lace and chain lace was being practiced in France and England. In 1916, Walter Edmund Roth found examples of crochet among Guiana Indians.

Lis Paludan of Denmark has three theories. One is that crochet started in Arabia, spread east to Tibet and west to Spain.



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The second is that crochet came from South America where a tribe used crochet adornments in some of their puberty rites. The third was that there are early examples of three-dimensional dolls worked in crochet in China.

According to Interweave, the first known crochet pattern was published in 1822 in a Dutch needle arts magazine.

When it comes to the rise in popularity of crochet, many practitioners point to 1845 when there was widespread famine in Ireland because a

plague wiped out their potato crops. This led to the widespread development of Irish crochet as families established cottage industries in lacemaking to avoid starvation.

Granny squares first appeared in Caulfield and Saward's “Dictionary of Needlework” in 1882.

WHAT IS CROCHET?

Crochet uses a hook to create stitches that look like small knots. Hooks come in a variety of sizes from the very small steel ones used to create lace

to extra-large plastic ones used mostly for afghans. Hooks can be made from steel, plastic, wood or even ivory.

While most crochet projects use yarn or thread, it isn't limited to that. Crocheters can also use fabric swathes, wire, twine or anything else that can be used to make knots.

There are many different stitches that range from short and small to very tall and twisty. Chain stitches (the shortest kind) are usually made as a base for other stitches and to create shapes.

The most common stitches are single crochet and double crochet.

The stitches made in crochet are bumpier and more textured than they are in knitting.

Because the stitches are bulkier, crochet lends itself to such projects as hats, scarves, dish towels and blankets.

According to Janya Gressel, the founder of JJCrochet, crochet appeals most to people who like quick projects, aren't afraid of making mistakes, have minds that think spatially and are creative.

Homemade Beauty Products

Beauty products often come with a high price tag, which might be why more crafters are making them for personal use, as gifts and to sell.

If you're looking for inspiration, visit craft fairs and talk to the vendors there. Browse through Etsy stores. Look at Pinterest and Instagram pictures.

Make sure you buy high quality ingredients. Beauty products are meant to protect the skin and to offer moments of self-indulgence. The last thing you want is a product that smells bad or causes someone's skin to break out in a rash. Many ingredients are available in the large craft stores or on Amazon, but you can also shop at specialty natural health stores.

TYPES OF BEAUTY PRODUCTS

While some beauty items require

chemical labs and a great deal of education and experience to create, there are many that can be created at home with just a little bit of on-line research. YouTube is filled with how-to videos.

The following are just the tip of the iceberg of what you can create:

Homemade soaps. Choose your shape, size and scent to make soap that is uniquely yours. You'll need such basic materials as lye, coconut and olive oil, distilled water and essential oils. You can also add dried herbs or flowers. Places like Spruce Crafts offer recipes that can form a foundation for you to build upon.

Lip balms and scrubs. Lip balms

and scrubs are great ways to treat chapped or dry lips and to give your face an extra shine. There are many DIY recipes, but dermatologist Joshua Zeichner told Elle Magazine that he advises against using any fragrances, colorings or essential oils because they can disrupt the outer skin layer and lead to greater dryness, irritation and rashes.

Bath bombs. Invented in 1989, they've seen a surge in popularity over the past several years. Bath bombs are usually ball shaped and are made up of emollients and softeners that dissolve when tossed into a bathtub. They can be made with all-natural materials. Scents are often chosen for their aromatherapy purposes, and they create a luxurious, pampering effect to a bath. Most contain sodium bicarbonate and citric acid which can help clean and

deodorize. A similar craft is a shower steamer which can be made with various essential oils that the steam from the shower helps you to inhale.

Body scrubs. Considered one of the easiest of beauty crafts to make at home, they can be prepared with as little as three ingredients and mixed together in a jar in minutes. Basic ingredients include salt, sugar and ground coffee or oatmeal, but you can also use essential oils, almond meal, linseeds, rice bran, buckwheat, cornmeal or many other options.

Beard oils. Not all beauty products are for women. Beard oils help to moisturize beards and can contribute to such things as beard growth and softening hairs. They are made by combing various oils such as essential oils, jojoba oil, argan oil, grapeseed oil, coconut oil, baby oil or olive oil.



Macrame Sees New Popularity

The 1970s have called and they want to congratulate you on reviving one of their most iconic crafts, macrame.

Once the rage for wall hangings, planter hangers, keychains and the ubiquitous owl hanging, the once-fad has made a return and has been trending throughout 2021 and 2022.

Avery Reekstin wrote for The Keene Sentinel that Boho style is returning and with it the popularity of macrame has surged. “Not only has macrame come back,” she wrote, “but it has come back with a vengeance and with more spark and spunk than way back when.”



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HISTORY OF MACRAME

What is macrame? It is a form of textile art made by knotting cord, rope or thick yarn to create a shape, design or pattern. While many today associate it with the 1970s, it's actually an ancient art. According to the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, macrame can be traced to at least the 13th century Arabic decorative weavers who used the knots on such things as towels or shawls. In the 1700s, European sailors started spreading the knowledge of knot-tying, using their knowledge as barter for goods. The Moors introduced macrame to Spain in the 15th cen-

tury and it would then travel around Europe. Queen Mary II taught it to her ladies-in-waiting and women throughout the Victorian Age would add macrame details to almost everything.

But in the U.S., it was the 1970s where macrame went wild. People tried making everything you could think of from macrame using jute and cotton twine. Then in the 1980s, it practically disappeared. It stayed mostly missing in action until just before the pandemic when a minimalist version of it started showing up in people's social media, particularly Pinterest and Instagram.

MACRAME TODAY

We have all sorts of ways of tracking trends. Lifestyle writer Marisa Casciano at Elite Daily reported that “Google's search data saw a 3,200% increase in the term ‘macrame knot guide’ in (2021) in the United States and notes that ‘macrame plant hanger tutorial’ is considered a breakout term, since it's been so popular.”

The Stylemongers of Bristol posit that it is the “Bohemian 1970s associations that are driving its renaissance today — the non-traditional, nature-loving, simple living creativity, the artisanal. Climate change anxiety is undoubtedly a factor in the popularity of house-

plants and by extension macrame planters.”

MACRAME PROJECTS

So what are today's macrame artists making? Sydney Meister at PureWow listed some “Gen Z-approved” macrame projects:

- Oversized wall hangings.
- Jute plant hanger.
- Hanging shelf.

Sites like Spruce Crafts offers instructions for such projects as earrings, bracelets, chairs, table runners and curtains.

MACRAME SUPPLIES

Compared to many crafts,

you don't need a lot of equipment. Lauren Thomann recommends using supplies that you already have. You can start, she says, with something as simple as one type of thread and one mounting ring.

Find something around your house that can be your work surface board. For your first project, use safety pins rather than specialized macrame pins. Then if you like it, you can buy more supplies.

Basic needed equipment includes:

- Jute, twine, yarn, hemp or leather.
- Mounting rings.
- Wooden beads.

Sustainable Crafting Practices

While crafters have always been a part of the “re-use” movement — whether it is saving scraps from one project to use in another or harvesting materials from a discarded item — today there is an even louder clarion call to practice sustainable crafting.

Sustainable crafting involves any do-it-yourself crafts that support health and well-being in our ecosystem. They involve taking actions and using materials that contribute to saving the environment and natural resources.



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RECYCLING

Recycling and re-using can tap into a crafter’s creativity. Rather than throw away an old pair of jeans, cut them up and use the fabric pieces for other projects. Collect and organize things you might otherwise throw out and figure out ways to repurpose them. Often just doing an internet search with the name of the material and “DIY craft” can turn up many ideas.

Doing this helps keep trash out of landfills and saves on the purchasing of new materials. It forms the foundation of sustainable crafting.

SUSTAINABLE CRAFTING MATERIALS

There are many ways to tap into sustainable crafting materials. Whenever you can, use natural materials and avoid plastics. Once you have sourced a supplier, consider grouping with other local crafters to buy materials in bulk and save on not only the financial cost of shipping, but the carbon cost of shipping.

If you work with yarn, shop for eco-friendly yarns. Some brands are made from materials that would otherwise go to waste. Ecocult recommends

avoiding the following yarns: acrylic, nylon and ones with synthetic dyes. It recommends using ethically sourced wool, silk, upcycled yarn, organic cotton, Tencel and local or artisan yarns.

If you do ceramics, try to source your clay locally. Avoid the more rare clay as finding it can disrupt the environment. Consider gathering your own clay.

Craft Scotland suggests collaborating with brickworks who might let you reclaim their offcuts or mining from the excavation waste of quar-

ries. It is something that can further root your practice locally.

When it comes to glazes, look for non-toxic, non-harmful colorants and naturally derived dyes.

Use kilns as efficiently as possible. Stagger their use in studios and use sustainable fuel.

EVALUATE YOUR SUPPLIER

Be careful about who you use as a supplier for your crafting supplies. Investigate them to see what their sus-

tainability practices are. Do they have a sustainability statement? Do they have a process for controlling toxic waste? Do they have cruelty free policies? How close are they to you — the more local they are, the less carbon is expended in having it shipped to you.

Everyone can do their part to make what they do more sustainable, to protect the planet from climate change. Look at your craft business and pick at least one thing you can do this year to make your business more sustainable.