

Hand-in-Hand Shrink Plastic Necklace

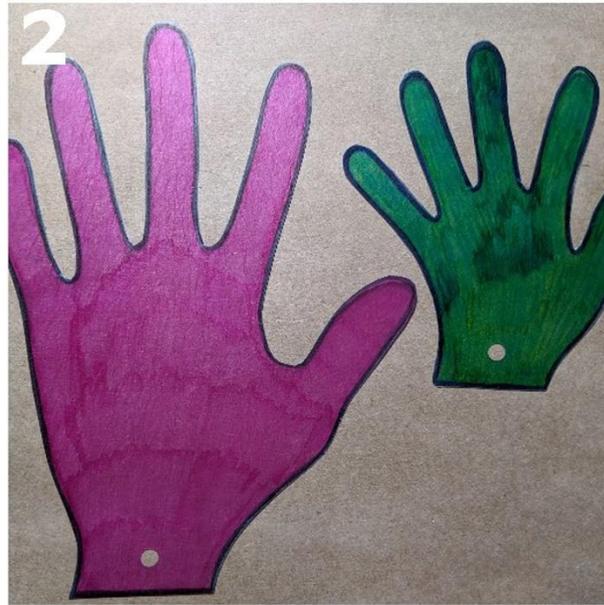
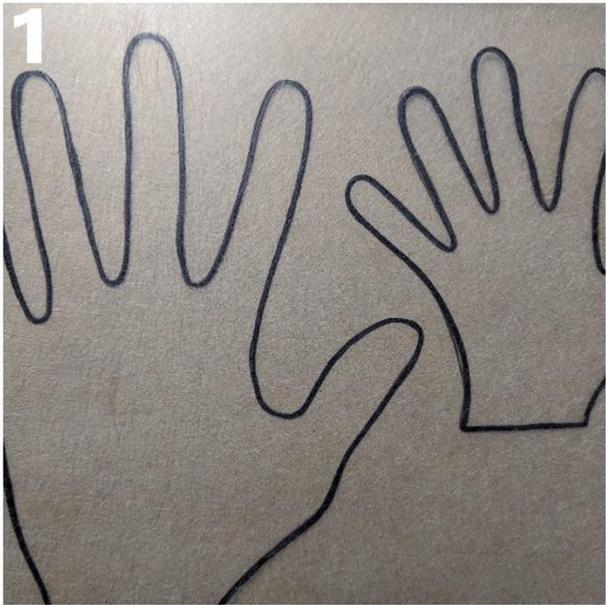


This sentimental project is the perfect way to capture a moment in your little one's childhood. Trace your child's handprint, as well as your own, onto shrink plastic. After baking, the charms will be 1/3 the size of the original handprints, but the proportions remain the same so you can always remember what it looked like to hold their little hand in yours. Shrink plastic can easily be ordered online, but you can also use #6 plastic, which happens to be commonly used for takeout containers. Just look for the recycling emblem containing the number 6, often found on hard plastic clamshells. If ordering shrink plastic online, the frosted variety is easiest to color. No matter what you use, these keepsake charms will surely become a treasured part of your jewelry box.

Materials:

- Shrink plastic or clear #6 plastic
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- Permanent markers or colored pencils
- Sandpaper, if using smooth plastic (optional)
- Oven and oven mitts
- Cardboard scraps for baking, or cookie sheet lined with parchment paper
- Jump rings and jewelry pliers, or small keyrings
- Chain or necklace for hanging

Instructions:



1. Trace your child's handprint and your own onto the shrink plastic. Use black or another dark color for the outline, and make sure it's nice and bold.
2. Color in the shapes using colored pencils or permanent markers. Sharpies seem to work best. Keep in mind that the colors will darken a bit after baking. Some commercial shrink plastic is frosted to accept colors readily. For smooth shrink plastic or #6 plastic, sanding beforehand will make coloring easier but is not absolutely necessary. Cut out the handprint shapes (manicure scissors work nicely for the small spaces between the fingers), and punch a hole in the wrist portion of the handprints.
3. Preheat your oven. Lay shapes on a piece of cardboard or a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper and bake shrink plastic according to manufacturer's instructions. If using #6 plastic, the general consensus is to bake at 350° for 2-4 minutes. Watch your charms closely as they bake. The shapes will curl up as they begin to shrink. Once they lay flat again and remain flat for 30 seconds, carefully remove them from the oven and press a piece of cardboard on top so they will remain flat as they cool.
4. Once charms are cool enough to handle, attach jewelry findings. You may choose to arrange the handprint charms side-by-side or on top of each other. If you don't have jewelry pliers and jump rings, you can use small keyrings or even wire to attach charms to the necklace or chain of your choice.



My son was so excited to see his handprint made into a wearable work of art. If you have wiggly babies or toddlers, one tip I have is to first trace their hand onto cardstock and use this as a template for future projects. It's one more shape to cut out, but you can use it over and over again without having to get your child to hold still each time. Using this template, I made a whole set of charms modeled after my son's handprint. These will be mailed to various women in our family for Mother's Day. What a sweet way to "reach out" and say hello to the ones you love!