

Create a Family Coat of Arms

If you lived in Europe during the Middle Ages, the head of your family might have had a coat of arms: a decorated design on his shield that showed the world who he was and what he stood for. These days, coats of arms aren't just reserved for knights on the battlefield. Any family can create a coat of arms as a way to teach children about family members' values, their ancestry, and their hopes for the future. Make your own coat of arms with this fun activity that's also a great way to get your child thinking about what's important to your family. It makes a great addition to the costume box as well!

What You Need:

- White posterboard
- Scissors
- Magic markers
- Cardboard tube from a paper towel roll
- Glue
- Paint (optional)

What You Do:

1. Cut a shield shape (round or the classic shield shape) out of the posterboard.
2. Your coat of arms presents your family to the world. Ask your child what your family is all about. Does he want to broadcast your loyalty, gentleness, or bravery to the world? Start a discussion about what qualities your child prizes in his family.
3. Traditionally, every picture and even every color on a coat of arms represents something different. For example, purple was the color of royalty and swords represented justice. Talk with your child about symbolism. How can he draw the values he hopes to capture in the coat of arms? If your child needs some help, suggest that he think of an animal, a color, and an object that represent his family.
4. Have your child draw on the shield with the markers. Typically, the images on the shield should be centered on the shield, with a field of color in the background. If you want, you can also encourage your child to use finger paint to add to the design.
5. Brainstorm a good motto for your family—anything from “We love each other!” to “Always learning.” Write it beneath the drawings (no Latin required).
6. After the shield is dry, turn it over and affix the paper towel tube vertically to the back of the shield using glue or staples. Bend the tube a little bit before attaching so that there is room for a little arm to go through. This will be the handle of the shield.
7. Now your little knight is ready to go forth proudly carrying his family coat of arms!

