

Questions to consider

- Which artwork did your child choose?
- Do you think your child invested more time of effort in one artwork over the other?
- What was your child's explanation as to why they chose one artwork over the other?

Other activities to try at home

- **Use a set of blocks.** Try taking turns building something with your child. Let them tell you where to put the blocks, then tell them where to place them. Which structure do they prefer?
- **Read a picture book with your child.** Ask them if the person who wrote the story or the person who made the illustrations should get credit for making the book. Ask them why they think this.

Parting Thoughts

The ability to place value on one's own original ideas is an important concept that children express at an early age. In adulthood, ideas are very important, and unique or original ideas are considered very valuable. This study found that children as young as six years think similarly to adults, and believe that the credit for a creation should go to the person whose idea is represented.

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**LIVING
LAB**

Research Bites

Creativity + Ownership

**How Children Value
“Ideas” and “Work”**

in the Creative Process

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Establishing “Ownership” of Creations



When it comes to giving credit for work, what matters more—ideas or labor? This is a challenging question for both adults and children.

In a study at Yale University¹, researchers asked 4 and 6 year olds to create two collages. For the first collage, the researcher told the child where to glue shapes. For the second, the child would tell the researcher where to glue shapes. **To find out if the children valued the picture with their *ideas* or *labor* more**, the researchers asked the children which picture they would like to take home. They also asked children who should own a piece of artwork – the person who had the idea for it or the person who made it.



What do children value more – ideas or labor?

For their own art, children preferred the picture that represented their *ideas* (but 4-year-olds may have chosen based on attractiveness of the finished product). When it came to another’s artwork, 6-year-old chose the person who had the idea (4 year olds did not have a preference). Thus, by age 6, children value ideas more than labor when it comes to creative works.

What does your child value more – their ideas or labor?

1. In the top box, or on a separate piece of paper, have your child draw a picture, make a collage, or do some other piece of art according to *your* instructions.
2. For the bottom box, switch roles with your child and have them give instructions while you make a piece of art.
3. Ask your child which artwork they want to keep and why.

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¹ Li, V., Shaw, A., & Olson, K. R. (2013). Ideas versus labor: What do children value in artistic creation? *Cognition*, 127(1), 38–45.