



# How to...

**RIGHT ON!**  
About 90% of shells are "dextral," which means they open to the right.



## Paint shells to keep or share

Summer is the perfect time to try this creative and social activity.

Painting seashells is a fun activity to do in the summer. Many people paint seashells to express themselves creatively. They also use them to connect with others by leaving them in places for people to find. Some people also paint seashells to sell so they can raise money for an important cause. Here is how you can get started painting seashells.

**Collect shells.** Inside the US and abroad, local regulations can vary, so first be sure any shells you find are OK to take and to leave behind later. You can pick up shells at the shoreline. A good time to look is during low tide. Remember that shells are animals' homes, so be sure the shells are empty! If you don't live near a beach, you can find shells at a craft store.

**Set up a workspace.** With an adult's supervision, pick a spot to paint. Put newspapers or an old tablecloth or towel down on your work surface, and gather the materials you need, such as paintbrushes, paint, and shells.

**Clean and prep shells.** First, wash your shells thoroughly. Rinse them in a bucket of warm, soapy water, and use an old toothbrush to scrub them clean.

Allow them to dry completely, then start painting with a white "base" coat: Paint the entire top side of the shell by either brushing on gesso or coating the shell's exterior with spray paint in flat white. Let the shells dry.

**Decide on your design.** A good method for beginners is to brush on your design with acrylic paints or use acrylic paint pens. You could paint a rainbow, an ocean scene, your pet, or an abstract pattern. If you want to protect your design from flaking and fading from the sun, top it with a UV-resistant clear gloss spray. Allow your painted shells to dry completely.

**Make a plan for your shells.** Now you can choose to keep your shells or hide them for people to find. If you keep them, see some ideas for displaying them in the box at right. If you want to hide them, consider writing a brief message on the back of the shell suggesting that the finder either keep it or hide it again for someone else to discover. (Don't share personal details like your name or contact information.) Put shells in a public space where they're likely to be seen, such as on a park bench. With an adult's supervision, you could also set up a stand in your neighborhood to sell your shells and donate profits to a charity of your choice.



Shells are your canvas!



### 3 ways to display shells

**Bowl or vase** A simple and attractive way to store and display your shells is in a glass bowl or vase. Place it on a table or somewhere in your room where you can admire it.

**Picture frame** Using a toothpick and a clear craft adhesive glue, you can attach shells (painted or not!) around a plain wood picture frame. You can fill in any gaps between shells with even smaller shells. Continue the theme by placing a summery photo inside.

**Shadow box** Look for a "top-loading" shadow box at a craft store. Deposit your shells through the slot in the top. You can add to your colorful collection as you paint more shells.