artsNOW
Integrated learning solutions

ART BOTS
Grade Band: 2-3
Content Focus: STEAM & ELA



LEARNING DESCRIPTION

In this integrated STEAM lesson, students explore motion and energy by designing and building simple “Art Bots” using battery packs, hobby motors, pool noodles, and markers. As they construct their bots, students observe how an electric circuit powers movement and how unbalanced design causes wobbling motion that produces abstract art.

After building and testing their robots, students will personify their bot in a creative writing prompt: “What do you think your Art Bot would say if it could talk?”.

They will write a narrative describing their bot’s personality, drawing style, and movement patterns. This encourages the use of descriptive language while reinforcing the science concepts of energy and motion. Students conclude with a gallery walk, where they display their robot-generated artwork.

LEARNING TARGETS

Essential Questions	“I Can” Statements
How do unbalanced forces affect motion? How do a motor and battery work together to power movement?	I can build a simple circuit to power a motor. I can explain how unbalanced forces affect motion.

How can I use the engineering design process to improve my Art Bot? What design choices influence how my bot moves and draws? How can creating an Art Bot character inspire narrative writing?	I can use the engineering design process to create and improve my Art Bot. I can analyze how design choices impact the movement and artwork created by my bot. I can create a character for my Art Bot. I can write a fictional narrative inspired by my Art Bot.

GEORGIA STANDARDS

Curriculum Standards	Arts Standards
Science **Grade 2:** S2P2.b Design a device to change the speed or direction of an object. S2P2.c Record and analyze data to decide if a design solution works as intended to change the speed or direction of an object with a force (a push or a pull). **ELA** 3.T.T.1.e Apply narrative techniques (e.g., character, setting, problem, resolution, dialogue) to develop a real or imagined experience using descriptive details, clear event sequences, and a sense of closure.	VA.CR.1 Engage in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas by using subject matter and symbols to communicate meaning. VA.CR.4 Understand and apply media, techniques, and processes of three-dimensional art.

SOUTH CAROLINA STANDARDS

Curriculum Standards	Arts Standards
Science 3-PS2-1. Plan and conduct an investigation to provide evidence of the effects of balanced and unbalanced forces on the motion of an object. 3-PS2-3. Ask questions to determine cause-and-effect relationships of electric interactions and magnetic interactions between two objects not in contact with each other. **ELA** ELA.C.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences using effective techniques.	**Anchor Standard 1:** I can use the elements and principles of art to create artwork. **Anchor Standard 2:** I can use different materials, techniques, and processes to make art. **Anchor Standard 7:** I can relate visual arts ideas to other arts disciplines, content areas, and careers.

ELA.3.C.3.1 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences. When writing: a. establish a setting and introduce a narrator or characters; b. use temporal words and phrases to sequence a plot structure; c. use descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop characters; and d. provide an ending.	

KEY VOCABULARY

Content Vocabulary	Arts Vocabulary
• Circuit – A complete path through which electricity flows • Motor – A device that converts electrical energy into movement • Unbalanced force – A force that causes an object to start moving, stop moving, or change direction • Vibration – A rapid back-and-forth motion that can create movement	• Line – A continuous mark made on some surface by a moving point. It may be two dimensional, like a pencil mark on a paper or it may be three dimensional (wire) or implied (the edge of a shape or form) often it is an outline, contour or silhouette. • Shape – A flat, enclosed line that is always two-dimensional and can be either geometric or organic • Pattern – Repetition of specific visual elements such as a unit of shape or form • Texture (visual) – The surface quality, or "feel" of an object, such as roughness, smoothness, or softness. Actual texture can be felt while simulated textures are implied by the way the artist renders areas of the picture. • Composition – How an artist arranges the Elements of Art (line, shape, form, value, color, space, texture) to create an artwork • Collaboration – Working together to create something new • Abstract art – Art that does not try to represent real life realistically; often made with shapes, colors, and lines

MATERIALS

- Hobby motors
- Battery packs (with AA batteries)

- Pool noodles (cut into smaller sections)
- Thin markers
- Tape (masking or electrical)
- Small weights (paperclips, washers, etc.)
- Scissors
- Googly eyes
- Pipe cleaners
- Foam shapes

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

Opening/Activating Strategy

- **Engage:**
  - Hook: Show a short video of a scribble bot or demonstrate an Art Bot in action.
  - Discussion–Ask students:
    - What do you notice about how it moves?
    - What might be making it move this way?
    - How could we create something similar?

Work Session

- Introduce the Engineering Design Process and explain that students will follow these steps to create their own Art Bots.

Explore – Building the Art Bots

- **Ask**: What materials and design choices will help us create a wobbling Art Bot?
- **Imagine:** Have students brainstorm ideas for how to make an artbot using the provided materials.
- **Plan**: Students sketch their design and label the parts and materials they will use.
- **Create:** Show students how to create their bots.
  - Attach a motor to a small battery pack.
  - Insert the motor into the center of a pool noodle piece.
  - Tape thin markers as "legs" to hold the bot upright.
  - Add weights to one side of the motor shaft to create an unbalanced motion.
- Have students place their bot on plain white paper. Turn on the motor and test the movement.

Explain – Connecting to Science Concepts

- Discuss how the unbalanced forces created by the off-center motor make the bot wobble.
- Relate the motion to concepts like vibration, force, and circuits.
- Ask students to describe what happened when they turned their bot on.

Improving the Design

- **Improve:** Students analyze their bot's movement and adjust its design to change the motion or artwork produced.
- Encourage experimentation:
  - Change marker placement for different drawing effects.
  - Add or remove weights to alter movement.
  - Adjust motor positioning to control wobbling direction.
- Ask your students to think of their Art Bot as an artistic partner! Ask students what they could add to this artwork to bring it to life. Could they turn the bot's movements into something meaningful or funny or beautiful?

- Students will use crayons, colored pencils, or markers to transform the bot's random motion drawings into imaginative creations (e.g., turning loops into flowers, zig-zags into roller coasters, spirals into galaxies).
- Ask students to name their collaborative artwork.
- **Have students respond to the following writing prompt:** What do you think your Art Bot would say if it could talk? Describe its personality, how it moves, and what kind of art it creates. Be creative and use descriptive details.
  - Encourage students to:
    - Give their bot a **name and voice.**
    - Use **descriptive language** to explain the movement (e.g., wiggle, spin, shake).
    - Describe the bot's **drawing style** (e.g., messy, circular, zigzaggy).
  - Have students write a fictional narrative in which the art bot is the main character. Students' writing should have a setting, plot structure, characters, descriptive words and phrases, and a clear ending.

Closing/Reflection

- Turn your classroom into a gallery!
  - Lay artworks on desks or hang them around the room.
  - Have students walk through the gallery, viewing each other's bot collaborations.

ASSESSMENTS

Formative

- Teachers will assess student learning through:
  - Observation of student engagement and participation.
  - Questioning during discussions to check understanding.
  - Peer discussions about design choices.

Summative

- Art Bot demonstration: Each student will showcase their bot and explain how design choices impacted movement answering the following questions.
  - How did unbalanced forces affect your bot's motion?
  - What design change improved your bot the most?
- Students' written response to the prompt and students' narratives.
- **Reflection:** Students' will complete a written or oral discussion of how they followed the engineering design process and what they would do differently next time.

DIFFERENTIATION

Accelerated:

- Ask students to modify their bot to create a specific pattern or shape.
- Challenge students to:
  - Write a first-person narrative from the Art Bot's point of view.
  - Use figurative language (similes/metaphors).
  - Add a conflict or challenge: e.g., "My markers ran out of ink in the middle of my masterpiece!".
  - Create a dialogue between their Art Bot and another Bot.
- Introduce Scratch: Students can create digital "bot" animations or stories reflecting the

movement of their physical bots.

Remedial:

- Provide pre-wired circuits to simplify the process.
- Provide extended time for building and reflecting.
- Offer verbal instructions paired with written guides.
- Allow for alternative methods of documentation (photos, audio).
- Provide a **sentence starter template**: “My Art Bot’s name is ____. It moves like a ____. It draws with ____**.** If it could talk, it would say, ‘____.’”
- Use a word bank with words like: Spin, shake, draw, color, happy, silly, messy, fast, slow
- Allow oral storytelling
- Use a partner storytelling activity where students build the story with peer support.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This integrated lesson provides differentiated ideas and activities for educators that are aligned to a sampling of standards. Standards referenced at the time of publishing may differ based on each state’s adoption of new standards.

Ideas contributed by: Shannon Green

Revised and copyright: May 2025 @ ArtsNOW