MAKE A
Wind-Up Toy Painting

With a bit of paint and tinkering, you can turn a mechanical toy into an art-making automaton. Experiment with wind-up toys and see what kind of rolling, hopping, stomping art you can create!

What you'll need

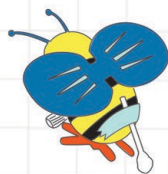wind-up toy · cotton swabs · tape · large sheet of paper · bowl · liquid watercolor*

*Food coloring will work as well. Be careful, both watercolor and food coloring can stain some floors.
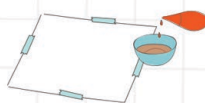
Step 1
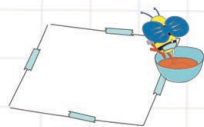Tape a cotton swab to the wind-up toy so the end barely touches the ground.

QUICK TIP
Break the cotton swab in half if it's too long for your toy.

Step 2
Tape a large sheet of paper to the floor. Measure some liquid watercolor into a bowl.
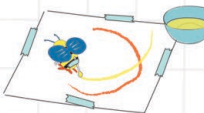
This project works best on level ground.

Step 3
Soak the end of the cotton swab in the liquid watercolor.

Step 4
Wind up the toy and let it loose!

Step 5
Repeat with different colors of paint.

Step 6
Try different kinds of wind-up toys to create different patterns.

tinker!

If you're having trouble getting your wind-up to paint, don't despair — **tinker!** Different wind-ups may need the cotton swab taped in different places, so do some test runs to find the best position. If you're having trouble, make sure that the cotton swab isn't interfering with any of the moving parts of your wind-up toy. Then let your wind-ups run and **see what you can create!**

If you have different kinds of wind-ups, get them all together to create one giant work of art!

This activity was inspired by an exhibit, titled **Autonomous Machines**, by artist **Echo Yang**. For this exhibit, Yang created paintings with simple mechanical devices, including a wind-up toy, an alarm clock, a vacuum cleaner, and a hand mixer.