

Generations

Making slime with my granddaughter

Recently, my 10-year-old granddaughter, Claire, was all set to spend the day with me and, as usual, I took great care in planning for our special time together. When I asked her the night before what she would like to do, her response was quick: She wanted to show me how to “make slime.”

Like any other investigative reporter (or a grandmother not constantly on social media), I did some research and was amazed at how much I had missed with regard to this new craze.

It took a while, but I found the basics on www.elmers.com since Elmer's glue is one of the main ingredients of the slimy concoction. The supplies were simple: baking soda, contact-lens solution, food coloring, and Elmer's.

Contact-lens solution?

Sure, I was puzzled, but purchased it like a dutiful servant, and the following day Claire and I set out to make some slime.

She showed me a few videos on her Kindle of girls measuring, mixing and molding a slimy-looking mess via YouTube.

Soon, we were doing the same motions of the goo in an array of vibrant colors tucked in plastic mixing bowls. She was tickled watching me groan as I handled each slimy mess, wet and yucky, but she thoroughly enjoyed the molding and folding.

I didn't quite get it, but for some reason, probably only known to young teenage girls, the craze took off during the summer of 2016.

In fact, there were 620,000 #slime posts on Instagram. Today, there are more than 12.2 million posts. The art of slime similarly exploded on YouTube: “2017 is undoubtedly the year that slime was a thing, like a big thing,” according to Kevin Allocca, head of culture and trends at YouTube.

Two million slime videos were uploaded to the site that year, racking up about 17 billion views.



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Normally, YouTube fads fade away after a few months, as the internet's restless attention moves on to something even newer, shinier or more outrageous. “But that's not what happened with slime,” Allocca says, “because it became this genre, and we're still seeing steady interest, in a significant volume.”

The homemade-slime craze grew so spectacularly that manufacturers of its ingredients were forced to adapt, and new companies were created. For a while, stores couldn't keep enough Elmer's glue in stock. “It became a ‘What the heck is going on?’ kind of a moment,” says Nick Hopf, brand director for Elmer's. “We started rethinking the business, rethinking aspects of our supply.”

Teenage girls were now calling the shots, and pretty quickly, Elmer's started selling new items like gallon-size clear glue, all-in-one slime kits and, later, glow-in-the-dark, color-changing and metallic glues.

Toy fads come and go, while some never leave us completely.

Back in the 1950s, Wham-O successfully marketed the Hula Hoop with sales of 100 million units in just two years, and the toy was one of the original inductees into the National Toy Hall of Fame. It's still sold and used today, especially in exercise classes.

Other hard-to-kill toys include versions of the yo-yo, which dates back thousands of years, and Rubik's Cube, created by Erno Rubik of Hungary, was considered as one of the top-selling toys of our times. It was most popular in 1980, when it sold 4.5 million units.

An art student came up with Cabbage Patch Kids dolls, and they became one of the top toy fads of the 1980s. Thanks to adoption certificates and enormous demand, the dolls generated over \$1 billion in sales in 1984.

Back in 1984, the Trivial Pursuit board game sold more than 20 million units. Since then, various other editions have hit the shelves. It was originally developed by a Canadian duo and is now owned by toy giant Hasbro.

Beanie Babies stuffed animals rose to prominence in 1995, but began to wane in popularity about four years later. Don't tell that to Beanie Babies collectors because they are still going strong and refuse to let any of their collections retire for good.

“Tickle Me Elmo” was the Sesame Street toy from Tyco that everyone wanted for the holiday season of 1996. Tyco sold 1 million Elmos that year.

The Pokemon franchise was started by Satoshi Tajiri in 1996. Extending beyond a video game, the series or brand has grown to include animated movies and TV shows, toys and a trading-card game. The video games have sold 200 million units worldwide; way back in 1999, sales were as high as \$1 billion.

Naturally, there are many others that never seem to die: Barbie, Easy Bake Ovens, Silly Putty (more than 300 million eggs sold), Hot Wheels, and my particular favorite, Mr. Potato Head (and Mrs., too).

I leave the next generation to figure out if the slime craze will become extinct in the world of toy fads.

My granddaughter will be turning 11 in October, so I remain hopeful I have seen the last of it.

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