

Top Tips for Cardboard Creations

By Tobi Meuwissen

In this resource children will explore the possibilities of cardboard. Children will utilise our ethos of design through making, working with materials to learn about the properties as they go. As well as improving dexterity skills, children will be encouraged to push the boundaries of imaginative design. Make cardboard worlds related to a topic or give children the opportunity to be inventors. This activity is perfect for EYFS and SEND as well as Primary Level children, and can be adapted according to abilities.



Materials for Construction

- Cardboard Boxes / tubes
- Flat Card / Cardboard
- Egg Boxes
- Glue stick
- Sellotape
- Masking Tape

- **Scissors**
- **Wire (or floristry wire for younger children)**
- **String / yarn / ribbon / plastic or metal needles**
- **Lolly sticks / matchsticks**
- **Straws**
- **Elastic Bands**

Materials for Decoration

- **Pens / thick sharpies**
- **Graphite Pencils**
- **Colouring Crayons**
- **Wax Crayons**
- **Oddments that can be used to make buttons or knobs (corks, buttons, milk bottle lids, metal bottle lids, empty pill packets, egg boxes)**
- **Poster Paint or ready mix**
- **Coloured card / tissue paper for collaging**
- **Pom Poms / Pipe cleaners / Glitter / Sand**

• Tinfoil

To begin....

You may want to decide as a class or around tables if there is going to be a theme to the creations. You may aim to create cardboard installations such as rooms in a house, a shop, post office or library, or you may want the children to just explore without a brief or invent their own creations. As a child I would pull out lots of cardboard and tin foil to create alien computers.

Provide children with lots of different sized boxes, they might want to make life sized ovens or small phones. Lots of shops throw away cardboard boxes so it may be worth checking with them or raiding your cardboard recycling bins – ask parents if they have some boxes they can donate. I found that boxes which contained foods not individually wrapped inside were greasy and crumbly and couldn't be used in the end, so try to avoid things like these, e.g. fish fingers.



Invite children to consider the dimensions of the box and jot down in sketchbooks or have spoken conversations about what they think they can turn the box into. Is the box long and flat? Or a perfect cube? What does the shape remind them of? Is there a pre-existing feature that comes with the box, for example flaps or holes that could be incorporated into the design? Children might have a few boxes that they can stack and build with. Arrange and rearrange the boxes to see what ideas the exploration triggers.



For the next step teachers and teaching assistants may want to help children break apart the boxes whilst ensuring that the flaps remain functional for turning the inside out and rebuilding. It's okay if there is some damage to boxes as children can just use Sellotape to stick it back together.



Flattened net for a cardboard phone

Depending upon abilities the teacher and / or the teaching assistant may want to rebuild the boxes so that the plain side is visible on the outside. This may be helpful for younger EYFS and SEND children who struggle with dexterity. Children can then paint, draw, stick objects down or collage directly onto the box, decorating it to look like their chosen object. Bear in mind that where Sellotape has been used pens, pencils and water-based paints will rub off. It's also worth noting that working directly onto a built box will work better if working with thicker cardboard, as it'll be sturdier against being lent on with pens and pencils.

Provide children with lots of bits and bobs such as milk bottle lids, corks, buttons, coloured

card, yarn, and wire which they can transform into buttons and twisting knobs. Encourage children to get creative with paper or thin card, folding, bending and twisting to add elements that might stick out from the box. They will also need to consider how they might attach these elements to add to the box. Ensure that children are surrounded by a variety of materials so that they can experience the qualities of the materials and make choices according to what works and what doesn't.

Here you can see some examples of simpler constructions that will still encourage children to improve dexterity skills by cutting with scissors, arranging, gluing and drawing.



Children who rebuild the box themselves will gain an understanding of nets and constructing using flaps, glue, Sellotape and needle and yarn. (If children use plastic needles, suggest that they make the holes using a sharp pencil.) Remind students that they will need to reverse all the folds so that the box can be rebuilt inside out.



Boxes to be made into a 'functional' till

Children will have big ideas that they might not have the skillset to pull off yet, but ensure that they have opportunities to be as inventive as they like so that they can develop these skills. If they want to make their objects seem more 'functional' by adding interactive parts, they will need to consider making these adjustments before rebuilding their boxes. Creating holes or flaps will be much easier if the cardboard is still flat. Students will have to consider how their adjustments will be transformed when the box is rebuilt.



Slits cut out for a toaster

Invite children to use sketchbooks to draw diagrams or write down what they've done, they can use them to keep a record of what was successful and what wasn't.



The base of a till



Coin holder to be slotted into the till



Finished Till

I kept my box creations quite minimalist, focussing more on sticking elements onto the cardboard, but encourage children to use lots of mark making if they would like to.

At the end of the activity if the class worked to a theme, ask them to work together to build their world with the cardboard objects that they've made.



DALER 
ROWNEY



You May Also Like

Creating a book world



make individual or shared models inspired by books, poetry or simple sentences

Pedagogy in 250 words: Making is hard



World in a matchbox



Make mini worlds in matchboxes or shoe boxes

Prop Making for Toys



Create props for your toys

Insect hotels



Create insect hotels using natural materials sourced from the local area