

Making a cardboard train engine

Learning aims

- Make simple models
- Create collaboratively, sharing ideas, resources and skills
- Begin to develop skills for joining.

Resources

- Pictures of cardboard train engines made by others, or images on a tablet, for children to refer to
- Large cardboard box
- Small cardboard box
- Paper cup
- Paper plates, plasticine, pencil
- Masking tape, PVA glue or a glue gun, split pins, stapler and staples
- Paint, large paint brushes
- Two strips of cotton, e.g. handles cut from a tote bag or thick string.



Activity outline

1. Look at and discuss the images of cardboard train engines, talking about what the children like and how they think the models were made
2. Share the range of resources available and encourage the children to plan, decide and problem solve how to use them to create a train engine. Adults can support the children where necessary, such as cutting thick cardboard or using the glue gun, but allow the children to lead the activity
3. Adults model and talk about what is being done and why, encouraging children to participate where possible, so that they develop an awareness of the processes and joining methods involved. Make sure adults listen to and act on children's ideas, such as choosing joining methods or colours
4. Choose which is to be the front and fix the paper cup upside down to make a funnel. Either use a glue gun or snip around the top of the paper cup to make flaps which can be glued or taped in place
5. Fix the smaller cardboard box at the back of the engine to make the cab
6. Put a ball of plasticine on the table top, place a paper plate on top and poke a pencil through the centre of the plate to make a small hole. Repeat so that there are six paper plates with holes
7. Use the split pins to fix the plates to the bottom of the box to make wheels, with three on each side
8. Paint as desired and allow to dry
9. Fix the cotton strips front to back on each side to make straps which go over the child's shoulders. These can be stapled or tied to the box. Alternatively, tie string on each side to make the shoulder straps
10. A child steps into the engine, lifts up the box, places the straps over their shoulders and then they're ready to go.

Extending the activity

- Once an engine has been made, the children are likely to want to make carriages so they can make a full train and go on journeys. Provide the relevant resources and allow the children to create their carriages
- Provide a range of paper sizes and types and encourage children to make their own tickets. Talk about destinations the children may have experienced on train journeys
- Provide appropriate costumes for roles, such as train driver and ticket collector and model the roles to the children so they know what to do. Use familiar phrases such as 'all aboard' and 'tickets please'. The ticket collector could use a single hole punch when checking the tickets
- Share information books about different types of trains (such as Usborne Beginners: Trains by Emily Bone) and read train related stories such as the train ride by June Crebbin or choo choo clickety-clack! By Margaret Mayo.

Special considerations

Important: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies and choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.



NDNA products to support you with this activity

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