



Puppet Theatre

Once you've made your puppets, you can create a stage for them to act and perform upon.

Design and make a simple theatre, including curtains, scenery and lighting.

You could even produce your own posters, programme and tickets for your puppet show!



Equipment

1. A large, strong cardboard box (try your local supermarket).
2. Three wooden dowels and one larger wooden rod. Dowel is a special kind of round wood, like a pencil, which you can buy from a hardware store.
3. A selection of coloured card, paper and other materials as decorations.
5. One large piece of red felt.
6. Some coloured tissue paper.
7. A few small torches, if you can borrow them.
8. Some acrylic paints and paintbrushes.
9. Some sticky tape, a pair of scissors and some glue.

Safety Stuff

Always check with an adult before you begin, so that if you need their help they're not taken by surprise. Working with items such as scissors can be dangerous, so be very careful when you use them. Make sure that you never leave them open or lying around where smaller children can reach them.

Before starting to make any of the puppets, cover the work surface you're going to use with some newspaper or an old cloth, and make sure that you're wearing an apron or some old clothes. Then gather together all the items you'll need before you begin.

A lot of the things you'll need can probably be found by hunting around the home, but remember to check with an adult before you take anything. Just because it's there doesn't mean that you can use it!

When you've finished, don't forget to tidy everything away. Wash any paint brushes you've used and remember to put the tops back on pens, paint and glue pots.

Steps

Step One

Before you start building your theatre, work out what you are going to do. Think about the overall design and what performances you might hold.

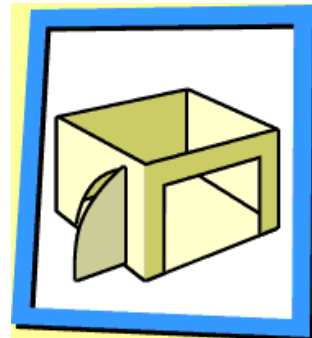
Step Two

To make the theatre, cut the top off a large, strong cardboard box. Then cut out a rectangular opening in one of the longer sides of the box - this will form the front of your theatre. You may need to ask an adult to help you do this with a craft knife.

Score a circular shape along the two ends of the box and fold back the flaps to form the 'wings' of your theatre. These will help support the structure and can also be used to conceal some of the tools and special effects used during performances.

Thread the second large bead onto the wool, followed by two smaller beads.

Knot the wool after the final bead and then trim the end of it with a pair of scissors.



Step Three

Use a variety of paints to make the theatre bright and colourful.

You could use a piece of coloured card to add a triangular shape at the front of the stage, and also to create a small board along the bottom. This will help to make your theatre more attractive for the watching audience.

Step Four

Now make some scenery for your theatre.

Start by designing and painting a backcloth. That's the scene that hangs at the back of the stage. Choose a general theme, such as a landscape, that you'll be able to use in a number of different plays. Use brightly coloured card and paints to do this, so that they'll be seen from the back of the audience.

Then design some scenery to hang in front of the backdrop. Make a couple of different pieces such as some trees, buildings or other structures that you will change at different points in your play. Once again use bright card and paints.

Step Five

Next attach each part of the scenery to a dowel rod. How will you do this? Make sure that the scenery hangs vertically and doesn't curl up at the edges.

The dowel rods can then be lowered into the theatre, starting with the backdrop and then adding smaller bits of scenery towards the front of the stage.



Step Six

You will need a curtain for your theatre, which you can raise and lower between different scenes in your play.

To make the curtain, cut a piece of red felt slightly wider than the front opening of your theatre. It also needs to be a bit longer than the height of the cardboard box - an extra 10cm of fabric should be enough.

Cut a semicircular pattern along one end of the felt to give it a more interesting shape when it hangs in the theatre.

Step Seven

Glue or tape the other end of the felt to the large wooden rod, and roll up the curtain.

Place the rod across the top of the box, at the front, so that the curtain hangs down. Simply turn the rod to raise or lower the curtain.

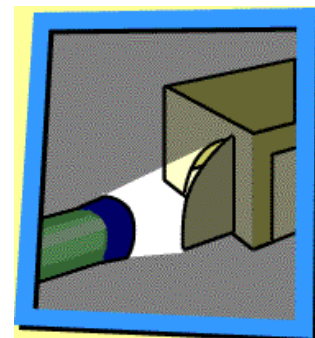
You will now be able to have a variety of scenery changes and curtains for different performances in your theatre.



Step Eight

It's quite easy to create effective stage lighting using one or two small torches. Simply cover them with coloured tissue paper to give different coloured effects and position them in the theatre wings behind the side flap.

Your stage is now lit, ready for the first performance!



Step Nine

You can turn the torches or bulbs on or off at different moments during the performance to create various effects and alter the mood of the show. This would be particularly effective if you held the performance in a darkened room with the curtains drawn and the lights turned off.