Cardboard crafts for kids

Peabody · checked 2026-11-06

Cardboard crafts for kids that do something: a shoebox guitar that plays, a balloon car that rolls, a hydraulic arm that lifts with water, a skeleton hand that bends. Each has picture steps, its materials, a time and the grades it fits. Every project is free, with no sign-up.

Cardboard and box projects

- Project: Wall Marble Run · Minutes: 30 · Grades: K–3rd · What it shows: Things roll downhill, and a gentle slope makes a slower ride.
- Project: Shoebox Guitar · Minutes: 30 · Grades: K–3rd · What it shows: A tighter, thinner band wiggles faster and sounds higher.
- Project: Hydraulic Robot Arm · Minutes: 120 · Grades: 5th–8th · What it shows: Push water into one syringe and it pushes the other, because water won't squash.
- Project: Tube Flashlight · Minutes: 40 · Grades: 3rd–8th · What it shows: A switch is a gap in the loop that you can open and close.
- Project: Chain Reaction Machine · Minutes: 45 · Grades: 2nd–8th · What it shows: A little push sets stored energy free, and it passes from one thing to the next.
- Project: Balloon Car · Minutes: 45 · Grades: 3rd–8th · What it shows: Push air out the back, and the air pushes the car forward.
- Project: Skeleton Hand · Minutes: 40 · Grades: 1st–8th · What it shows: Fingers bend when a muscle pulls a tendon, a strong string that runs to each fingertip.
- Project: Spooky Shadow Theatre · Minutes: 45 · Grades: K–8th · What it shows: Light goes in straight lines, so a puppet that blocks it throws a shadow.

More to build

- Activity: STEM projects · What kind: Explore · What a child does: Builds and experiments with things from the recycling and the kitchen. · Ages: 6 and up
- Activity: The Workshop · What kind: Explore · What a child does: Step-by-step builds and experiments to follow. · Ages: 6 and up
- Activity: The Rainy Day Box · What kind: Make · What a child does: Cards of forts, crafts, games and experiments with things most homes have, each saying how long, how messy and what a grown-up does. · Ages: 3 and up

Every project lists its materials and tools before you start, and a grown-up helps with anything sharp. Everything here is free through the end of 2026, with no ads, no sign-up and nothing to download.

Questions parents ask

What can kids make from cardboard?

A shoebox guitar, a balloon car, a hydraulic arm that lifts with water, a skeleton hand and a shadow theatre. The table lists each one with its time and grades.

What do we need?

Cardboard, a box or a tube, plus tape, string or straws for most of them. Each project page lists its materials and tools, and says what can be swapped.

What ages are the cardboard projects for?

About 6 to 12. The Grades column says which grades each one fits, and younger children can build with a grown-up.

Are these projects free?

Yes. Everything here is free through the end of 2026, with no ads, no sign-up and nothing to download.

Free at peabody.kids/cardboard-crafts-for-kids