



We're big believers in the power of play — and it's never been more necessary than it is now.

We're sharing these three activities from our new book, *The Nature of Play*: A handbook of nature-based activities for all seasons, as free printable activities to explore at home. And whether you're remaining indoors or not, they offer a chance to slow down, connect once more with the world outside, and lose yourself in your imagination.

Like all the activities in *The Nature of Play*, they're simple, seasonal, require little more than curiosity, and provide a precious few minutes of calm enjoyment for children (and brief respite for adults!).

Please enjoy, share — and show us your wonderful creations on Instagram (@fannyandalexander).

For a year of making, exploring and wondering, purchase the full book here: <http://fannyandalexander.co.uk/book>

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Up to 3 hours
All seasons
Indoors
Adult assistance required ••

Create a scene

Set the stage and who knows
what tales might unfold?

GATHER TOGETHER

- . A sturdy cardboard box (ideally measuring around 30cm x 30cm x 30cm)
- . Sticky tape
- . Craft glue
- . Scissors
- . Coloured paper and cardboard
- . Scraps of fabric, old wallpaper and wrapping paper
- . Washable paints
- . Egg cartons, matches and wooden lollipop sticks
- . Felt-tip pens

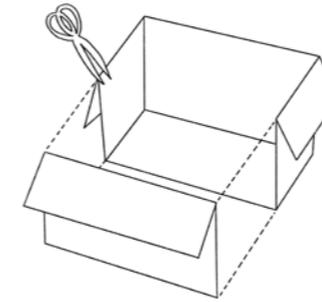


Fig. 1

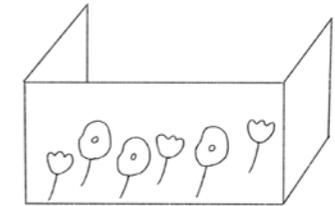


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

LET'S GO!

Step 1. Choose your scene. You're going to make a set, like a theatre backdrop, for staging plays of your own creation. So the first thing you need to do is to think about what kind of scene you're inspired by. A forest bathed in moonlight, perhaps? An underwater scene in Atlantis? A Victorian doll's house? Or how about the surface of a never-before-seen planet?

Step 2. Get your box ready. Trim off any flaps you don't need (see Fig. 1), reinforce any joins with tape, and decorate the outside of your box in keeping with your theme (see Fig. 2). Note that most marker pen colours will look dark and drab on cardboard, so for brighter colours, glue on coloured paper.

Step 3. Decorate the backdrop. Line the box with wallpaper or patterned paper, or paint it. You can glue on other materials for texture, too – maybe moss and twigs for a forest scene, blue cellophane and shells for your underwater backdrop, or tinfoil for a cosmic landscape. Let your imagination run wild!

Step 4. Decorate the 'stage'. You can do this two ways: Diorama-style, where you create staggered rows to create a sense of depth. For instance, if you're creating a forest, use a piece of stiff paper to draw and cut out lots of trees and boulders, leaving a small 'foot' (about an inch) at the bottom of each one. Fold the 'foot' and glue it to the bottom of your scene



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towards the back, positioning it so that it stands up by itself. Repeat until you have a back row, then glue in a new row of trees a few inches further forward (see Fig.3). It creates a lovely 3D effect. Dollhouse-style : This is where you use your space as a room and furnish it how you like. Making the furniture is the fun part – matchsticks can be glued together to build bed frames, chairs and tables and matchboxes can be stacked to form drawers. Egg cartons can be cut to build sofas and armchairs, and lollipop sticks can be used to make fridges, wardrobes – or anything you like! Sew or glue pieces of fabric to create pillows, blankets and rugs.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Although they're beloved by many children, dollhouses were actually invented for adults. The earliest dollhouses were called 'cabinet houses' and were created as status symbols for wealthy Dutch, German and English aristocracy. Later on, the 'baby house' was created for children. They were perfect, scaled-down replicas of the family homes they lived in, and they were used to teach daughters how to run their future households. Luckily for you, yours is purely for fun!

DEAR GROWN-UPS

As you have read, dollhouses weren't always the theatres for children's imaginations that they are today. But that's what makes them such enduringly magical things – they're kingdoms over which children have complete dominion. They can explore alternative realities, inhabit others' points of view, replay real scenarios with different outcomes – using their imaginations to develop the social skills that help them to navigate the real world.