

Design and Build a Cubby House

Making an indoor playhouse or cubby house out of boxes is a creative activity that can absorb your child for hours. Help make the house completely dark and encourage your child play with a torch inside. Pillows, cushions and blankets can also be added to make it cosy and inviting.

How to Do It?

With your child, plan the design of their cubby house. Suggest they draw their design before they begin.

Decorate the outside of the cubby house with crayons and paint, cut openings for windows or doors (adults do this step). Your child's cubby house could be a castle, a cave or a fairygrotto - the possibilities are endless. Once built, suggest your child finds things to make the inside cosy and inviting, or to make a sign for their cubby.

What Learning is Occurring?

- Encourages planning, creativity and imagination
- Communication and negotiation skills

Why are Cubbies so Inviting?

Back in 2001, David Sobel, an Education Prof at Antioch University in New England, published a fascinating book called Children's Special Places. He was interested in the question of when and why children build cubbies and forts. This typically begins around the age of 5 or 6, but can be supported earlier.

Building forts is sheer unadulterated fun: a wonderful way for children to let their imaginations run wild. It's also a way for them to assert their independence and discover an identity for themselves that is separate from the role that's been imposed on them within their family. What's more, it's something that they do with friends, so, in addition to all the ways it helps them develop practical skills, it serves as a way for children to develop social skills. Maybe most important of all, it helps children develop a sense of a group identity; for having a fort is ultimately about who is allowed in and who is kept out.

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Things you will need

- Very large box or boxes
- Scissors and sticky tape (if needed to stick cardboard together)
- Cushions, pillows and blankets
- Torch
- Art and craft materials
- Sharp knife for adult to cut openings

Tips

- Ask at an appliance store if they have any large empty boxes to spare
- Ask your child questions to prompt them to create the cubby house, such as: How will you get in? How can you make the inside cosy? What will you do for light?
- With your children, decide on and agree to some simple rules to keep everyone safe. E.g. Don't sit on top of others, don't pile on pillows on top of others etc.



Age Considerations

- Babies: lay your baby down on the floor and gently lift a scarf up and down over baby. Bringing it gently down to near their face and let it float back up into the air. Sing a song or play a gentle game of Peek a Boo.
- Toddlers: create a cosy place to play hide and seek!
- Preschool: use the couch cushions, trampoline, balcony or garden to create a space to play with familiar toys.
- Transition to school: Help your child to create a space of their very own, where they can read, snack, play, and hang out with siblings, pets or family. Children can lose themselves for hours transforming their bedroom or another space into their cubby house.

