



Balloon Explorium

Basic Tips and Tricks for Building Paper Models

Almost all paper models consist of primary shapes like cones, tubes and boxes arranged in any number of ways. Once you get the hang of making these shapes, you'll be able to do even the most complex models. Below are a few tips to help you get started building paper models. You may find that some of the techniques below work well for you and some don't.

Basic Tools Needed:

1. Glue (Rubber Cement works best) or "tacky" glue
2. Sharp Scissors (small Fiskars-type allow you to get into tight corners)
3. Hobby Knife (Xacto-type)
4. Ruler (any straight edge will do, preferably with a metal edge)
5. "Dead" Pen (no more ink) or crochet needle
6. Colored Pens or Pencils
7. Cutting Matte - not necessary, but will save your table top.

Folding:

There are two folding tips that will help when assembling your models. Score the fold lines, and fold all parts before gluing. This will make your projects go together a lot easier and much faster. Use a ruler and "dead" pen to score the fold lines.

Here are a few other tips to help put your models together... Read the instructions all the way through one time before cutting out any of the parts. Cut out each part as you need it. After you cut out each part, use a ruler and a "dead" pen (no ink) to "draw" a score line along each fold. This will make the fold more accurate.

Fold all parts and test fit them before applying any glue. This way, you will not be fighting to get that last tab folded down in some awkward position.

Making Tubes

Tubes are pretty simple to make. To make them even easier, try curling them using the edge of a desk or table before gluing together. Cut out the part that is to become a tube. Start with one end on the corner of your table and slowly pull it across the corner. This should make gluing the tube a lot easier than trying to glue and form it at the same time.

Making Cones

Cones are very similar to tubes, just tapered down on one end. Cut the part out and start to curl it using the edge of a table or desk. The only difference between curling a cone and curling a tube, is when curling a cone, you want to keep the pointed tip in one place on the edge of your desk while rotating the curved part over the edge of the desk.

Finishing Details

A couple things you can do to make your models look really good when finished.

Finish the edges of your model. That's right, the edges. A printer can't print on the edge of the paper, so this edge will show white on a model that may be dark green or blue. Use some colored pencils or pens to color the exposed edges before gluing the parts together. Use good quality paper in your printer if you have to print the model. If you have a color inkjet printer, use the special paper so the colors and details of your model look good. If you accidentally get too much glue on a part, take a moment to wipe the excess off before it dries. Take your time and make sure all the parts line up properly before gluing.



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Just like anything else, it's going to take some practice to get each model exactly how you want it, but you'll find the more models you do the easier they become.

Paper and Cardstock

Most printers these days will print cardstock up to the most used 67 lb. and even up to the sturdy 110 lb. With the heavier stock, you might have to 'help' it through the printer by a gentle (but firm) push. 67 lb is best for the 'regular' smaller sized models. The heavier 110 lb is for larger models. We've discovered if you're printing a model that's basically green, beige, or yellow, it's absolutely magic to print on 'ivory' or 'cream' colored cardstock. The colors are noticeably deeper and more saturated. It should be noted that the adhesive does not stick well to the shiny surface of glossy photo paper, but it will if one scratches the areas to be glued with the craft knife or similar instrument. The surface must be penetrated in order for the glue to stick well...but the results of using photo paper is well worth the extra effort.

Gluing:

A lot of modelers use Elmer's Glue-All (a PVA glue, i.e. a latex resin dispersed in water, commonly called white glue) tacky glue is available at craft or fabric stores and is great for small parts. Tacky glue is basically thickened white glue. You'll find that leaving a small dab of Elmer's out for a few minutes, results in something similar. Plain old white glue is probably the best value. Adding a very small amount of water can help the working time.

Use a very small, flat brush to apply the glue giving you a lot better control over the amount of glue - you only need a tiny amount. Keep a glass of water handy to keep the brush clear of glue. You'll probably find that "Tacky Glue" works better; It sticks better initially and sets up faster.

Aleenes is a brand of 'tacky glue' and recommended for card modeling. Get a small jar (i.e baby food jar size) use the lid to spread your glue on. After the Aleenes container gets about half empty it can be difficult trying to squeeze some out, usually resulting a "pooooop" of air and a splatter of glue. I put the Aleenes upside down in the baby food jar and that way the glue settles to the nozzle of the container. Needless to say one should put the cap on the Aleenes before turning it upside down.

If you can find it, UHU glue is also good and durable.

Rubber Cement is a good choice, especially when you place it on both surfaces and let it dry. If you get extra on areas you don't want, it will rub off after letting it dry. The advantage is that it requires just a few seconds to bond the two surfaces together.