



# Sculptures *in space*



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## Cross-curricular links

**KUW** – build and construct a wide range of objects.

**PD** – handle tools, objects, construction and malleable materials safely and with increasing control

*Mention rockets, planets and airships and the children's imagination will run wild. Plastic bottles, cardboard tubes and papier mâché are ideal resources to create a planetary world*

A minor incident in our local park last week unexpectedly brought back some happy memories. Alfie, my four-year-old son, accidentally let go of the string attached to the balloon he had just been given and it quickly disappeared into the blue sky, leaving him in tears. As I reassured him that the balloon was off on an adventure to the moon, I was reminded of the hours I spent as a child, patiently transforming boxes and balloons into rockets and planets. I suddenly realised that the best way to stop the tears was to introduce Alfie to the wonders of papier mâché.

If you consult any passing four-year-old before removing the recycling, you will quickly discover that what resembles rubbish to you looks more like potential inter-planetary craft to them. Some plastic bottles seem like they have been purposefully designed to live another life as a spaceship. Exciting transformations can take place in a matter of minutes, but if you want to ensure that the finished results of the craft survive past playtime then papier mâché is the answer. The following are a selection of ideas that could help to reposition your setting in a galaxy far, far away...

## To boldly go...

### Creative development

**Stepping Stones:** understand that different media can be combined; experiment to create different textures.

**Early Learning Goal:** explore colour, texture, shape, form and space in two or three dimensions.

### Making spacecrafts and planets

Begin by assembling a collection of plastic bottles and cardboard tubes, add a few boxes and inflate some balloons. Talk to children about their understanding of planets. Most of their knowledge will come from fictional characters that they have seen in books and on television, so now is a good time to encourage them to make connections between the real and the imagined.

Show the children how to tear newspaper neatly (it is always easier to tear along the grain of the paper) and make a collection of small strips. Mix some coldwater paste or thin down some PVA glue with water.

Brush a thin layer of paste on to the object to be

covered then layer strips of paper over the surface. Seal each strip with a second layer of paste. The first strips can be a little awkward to stick, so encourage the children to work in pairs – one can keep the structure still, while the other pastes. As layers build up, the objects will become easier to handle.

This can take a while so use the opportunity to engage the children in conversation about what they are making. Encourage them to describe what they are doing or fantasise about what life on their spaceship or distant planet might be like. Some children will be interested in talking about how the materials they are working with change when they combine them.

Once the whole surface is covered, leave the pieces to dry before inviting the children to paint them. Alternatively, if you want to complete the whole activity in one session, suggest they add an additional layer of coloured tissue paper. Encourage the children to create interesting effects with overlapping different tones of the same colour and, once again, take the opportunity to extend their vocabulary by challenging them to compare the different tones they are working with.

Make sure each object has a thin layer of paste or glue as its top layer – this will seal the paper in and make the structure stronger. Display their creations by suspending them with string. Then let the children create some moonscape backgrounds.



### Ideas for younger children

Let the children create potato print planets or make a luminous lunar landscape by printing in bright colours on to dark backgrounds.

### Ideas for older children

Once the children are confident in creating papier mâché structures from bottles and tubes, encourage them to develop complex spaceships by adding card triangles before applying newspaper.

### Further ideas

- Marbling inks can create stunning outer space whirling effects. Pour water into a shallow tray and add a few drops of coloured inks. Move the inks around, then gently lay a piece of paper on to the surface to create a unique print.
- Sort recyclable materials into different types, for example, any silvery items such as tin foil and cans can be assembled into old-fashioned robots. The pieces do not need to be attached, simply arrange them into robotic figures and photograph them. (If you are familiar with ICT, take photos of the different poses and animate them onscreen).
- Pressing paper doilies into white paint and printing on to black paper can easily create starry sky backdrops for your sculptures.

