

REYNOLDA

Design a Chair

Project

Explore everyday household items and transform them into a miniature chair while thinking about materials and construction methods.

Samples



Sample chair designs from a family workshop at the Museum



Sample chairs with various materials

Inspiration

Look around you. It is very likely that there is some form of chair nearby (or underneath you!) People have been creating seating furniture for centuries. While all chairs are meant to hold a seated body, chair designers are also interested in how chairs look and feel. Sometimes chairs are made from familiar materials like wood and fabric. You can explore some of Reynolda's wooden, upholstered chairs in our online gallery [Chairs at Reynolda](#). Designers have also made chairs from cardboard or yarn or glass or... the list goes on. In this project, see what materials you can find and how creatively you can combine them into a miniature chair form.

Not only does Reynolda have actual chairs as part of its collection, but you can find chairs in the artwork too. Check out our online gallery [Chairs in Art](#).

Vocabulary

Prototype: a first model of a design

To learn the names of some parts of a chair, check out this short video: [How to Look at a Chair](#).

Materials

- **Various random materials for chair parts like:** aluminum foil, bottle caps, cardboard, champagne cages, corks, egg cartons, empty jar lids, fabric scraps, felt, floss packaging, foam, moss, old pool noodles, pipe cleaners, plastic straws, popsicle sticks, toilet paper tubes, yogurt cups or other plastic containers
- **Adhesives and connectors like:** glue, hot glue (with adult help), tape, tooth picks, string/yarn, wire
- **Tools like:** Scissors, wire clippers if you'll need to cut wire, an ice pick/awl (with adult help) if you'll need to poke holes, pencil, ruler
- **Decorative elements like:** Stickers, markers, paint, pom-poms, tassels, ribbon, beads, tacks

Process

For video instructions, find this episode on [Reynolda's YouTube page](#).

Before you start making, find your favorite chair nearby. Consider:

- What materials were used to make this chair?
 - What techniques were used to make this chair? (If wood, is it cut and joined together? How do the legs fit to the body? If it is metal, do you see any places where it was welded (melted) together? Was any sewing involved with this chair?)
 - What do you think the designer thought about when he or she was trying to make this chair? Was color important? Comfort? Interesting lines to look at?
 - Why do you like this chair?
 - How does it feel to sit in the chair?
1. Collect items around the house that you could use for sculpture, things like bottle caps and yogurt cups in the recycling, and random packaging materials that would otherwise get thrown away or recycled. We call these "junk sculpture" materials.
 2. With the objects in front of you, see how they could turn into different parts of a chair: a seat, a back, legs. Use the adhesives and connectors you have to put the pieces together.
 3. Some hints for connecting things
 - a. toothpicks work great at connecting pieces of foam
 - b. Wire or pipe cleaners can wrap around two elements to connect them when tape or glue might not work. *Note:* If you want to cut wire or pipe cleaners, use a wire cutter so you don't dull your scissors!
 - c. If you have an awl or ice pick, and an adult to help, you can poke holes in items like bottle caps and then use wire or string through the hole to attach it to something else.

Continue this activity: If you are interested in seeing how other designers have made chairs, you can see various chairs in these collections online, as well as many more not listed:

[The Design Museum](#), London

[Museum of Arts and Design](#), New York, New York

[Cooper Hewitt](#), New York, New York – for chairs and chair design drawings

Creative writing prompt: Write a short story (or letter, or poem) from the perspective of a chair. What might the chair think and see?

Share your creations on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram with **#ReynoldaatHome**