

Have fun encouraging your child's creative, construction and number skills with these castle-inspired activities

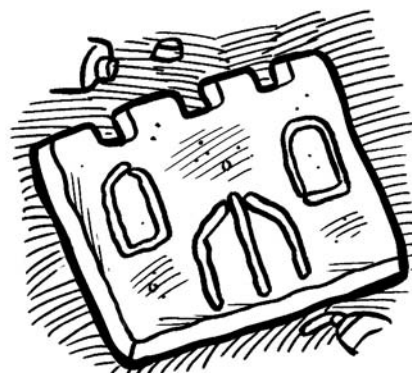
A theme based on 'Castles' provides many opportunities for interesting play and craft activities at home and in the early years setting. For example, social skills can be developed during role play based on living in a fairytale castle, language

skills can be encouraged by talking and writing about fantasy castles, mathematical skills can be improved by counting castle features and skills in investigation can be developed while finding out about real castles.

Castle cookies

Stimulate your child's creative skills by making castle-shaped biscuits together. Sift 225g of self-raising flour and a pinch of salt into a bowl. Rub in 150g of butter, then add 100g of caster sugar and a beaten egg and mix into a stiff dough using a wooden spoon. Knead gently on a floured board until smooth then roll out fairly thinly. Provide a blunt knife and a simple card-shaped castle tower template (5cm x 10cm). Help your child to cut out approximately 15 to 20 castle shapes from the dough. Place the shapes on a baking tray, prick with a fork and bake in a preheated oven at 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4 for approximately 15 minutes.

Top tip: When the biscuits are cool, invite your child to decorate the castles with windows, doors or patterns using coloured icing.



Model a castle

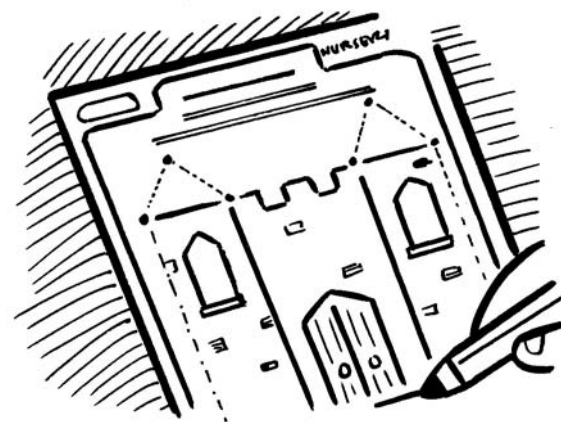
Encourage your child's construction skills by helping them to create a 3D model of a castle, using a range of recyclable materials such as cardboard boxes, tubs and tubes. Provide strong adhesives such as masking tape, PVA glue, double-sided tape and 'glue-dots'. Look at pictures and photographs of real and imaginary castles with your child, then help them to assemble and decorate their model using paints, thick pens or sticky tape.

Top tip: Help your child to add simple, but effective features to their model castle, such as doors and windows that open, fabric flags on sticks and a pull-up drawbridge.

Fairytale castle

Develop your child's number skills by asking them to complete the dot-to-dot castle on the 'Fairytale castle' photocopiable sheet (see opposite). Invite your child to colour in and cut out the castle and fairytale characters to create a fairytale scene on a large sheet of paper or card.

Top tip: Encourage your child to print, draw or paint additional details to the scene, for example, hills, clouds, animals, flowers, paths and other fairytale characters. Use the scene to inspire storytelling skills.



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Useful books and resources

- *Jack and the Beanstalk, Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty* (Favourite Tales series, Ladybird Books).
- *The Usborne Castle Jigsaw Book* by Alice Pearcey and Anna Milbourne (Usborne Books).

- *Real Castles: Digital Time Traveller* (with CD) by Mike Corbishley and Michael Cooper (TAG Books).
- *See Inside Castles* (An Usborne Lift-the-flap book).



- Visit www.skiptoncastle.co.uk (go to Fun Page).