

## SHADOW PUPPETS

Duration: 30-60 minutes

Institution: NYSCI

Skill level/Age Level: 5 and up

Group size: 2-30 children

## INTRODUCTION

Using index cards, brass fasteners, and wooden skewers, children make jointed shadow puppets to perform.

## MATERIALS AND TOOLS

*Essential Materials:*

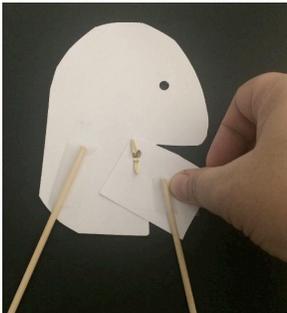
- Scissors
- Hole punches
- Markers (use a single color only to encourage planful drawing rather than decoration)
- Light to cast shadows
- Screen or wall for shadow puppet performance
- Clear tape
- Index cards or thin “cereal box” cardboard
- Short brass fasteners
- Skewers or long wooden stirrers

*Optional Materials:*

- Straws

## SET UP

- Set up the light so that it shines on the wall in such a way that kids will be able to block the light with their puppets
- It's best to have a jointed puppet



## HOW TO OR STEP-BY-STEP

1. Introduce the activity—tell them that you’re going to make shadow puppets to put on a story.
2. Show them a puppet that you have on hand so they can see the shadow it makes. Demonstrate how they can make the puppet out of hinged pieces to make puppet that can move. (Young children might focus on just the shape and shadow without exploring hinges.)
3. Cut out pieces and punch holes where you want the joints to connect
4. Overlap the pieces, lining up the holes and use brass fasteners to connect the pieces
5. Tape on sticks or straw to use as handles for your puppet.
6. Invite the children to think of a story they want to perform with puppets. They might each work individually, or they might decide to collaborate and all make puppets and props/scenes for the same story.
7. Be sure to have the children to test their puppets early and often. (Often very young children will draw faces and other details on their puppets, not realizing that they won’t show up in the shadow.)
8. Encourage in-depth story telling. Often the plot of the story will suggest movements they need to build into their puppets. (e.g., the person needs to talk, the dragon needs to breathe fire, the butterfly needs to flap its wings, etc.)
9. Have a performance!

## FACILITATION PROMPTS AND QUESTIONS

- Have some puppets on hand that the children can try for themselves. Encourage them to notice what features show up in the shadow and what features don’t.
- A good way to work with children is to ask them about the story they want to tell. The more detailed the story, the more movements they might decide to incorporate
- When thinking about joints and movement, have the children demonstrate the motion they want with their bodies. That might help them think of the kinds of joints they need to make
- It’s a good idea to have a few straws on hand. You can create a sliding joint by sliding a skewer in and out of a straw.
- Most people think of making a shadow puppet by cutting things away, but you can also make a shadow puppet by taping shapes together. Only the outline shows up in the shadow. So feel free to ad on to what you have.
- The shadows of your puppets will grow as you bring them closer to the light and shrink as you bring them further away from it. Stories that incorporate growing and shrinking encourage playing with this phenomenon. (Note: can you get this effect with outside shadows made on a sunny day? Try it.)
- Be sure to leave time for the children to perform their stories for each other. They might decide to film them to watch later.

- Keep interesting and complex puppets in the kit for next time—if the makers will let you have them!

### MATERIALS SOURCES

- Lamp for shadows—you want something that makes a good shadow, so look for bright lights with small, unfaceted bulbs.
  - a. Some LED lights are great, like this inexpensive Jansjo light from Ikea (<http://www.ikea.com/us/en/catalog/products/20169658/>). This one even has a clamp and gooseneck, so it's easy to set up virtually anywhere.
  - b. Projectors cast beautiful shadows, so if you have one on hand, it's great. (Note: while this will definitely work, it's an expensive long-term solution, since the projector lamps are often pricy.)
- Brass Fasteners—you can buy these at any office supply store, but it's worth comparison-shopping. For some reason, the prices of brass fasteners vary wildly, even in the same store or website. The best price I found \$0.99 for a box of 100 ½" brass fasteners at Quill (<http://www.quill.com/brass-plated-fasteners/cbs/061721.html>) But even at Quill, I also saw a box of 100 1-inch fasteners for \$19.00
- Skewers or wooden stirrers—Bamboo skewers work really well, since they're thin and long. Get them at your local restaurant supply store, dollar store, or a website like <http://www.webstaurantstore.com/> . You can also use wooden skewers, which are slightly thicker than the bamboo skewers. Long wooden stirrers aren't as thick or long, but they're not point like the skewers and still work pretty well. You probably can't get those at a dollar store, though. You can use straws instead, but they're not very long and even the clear straws make wide shadows that detract from the puppet's shadow.

### KEYWORDS (STYLE: HEADING 1)

- Light
- Shadow
- Optics