

# Create a Model House

We often focus on how emperors and pharaohs lived in the ancient world, but what did life look like for ordinary people? Archaeologists examine objects people were buried with, such as clay models of homes that reflected the architecture of the time. For this activity, observe the architecture of the homes in your neighborhood and create a model home that reflects your life.

## PART ONE: Explore Ancient Architecture

Architecture is the way a building is designed and constructed. Look closely at the model house pictured and answer the questions below.

What do you notice first about this house?

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How many floors does it have?

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Describe the windows and doors.

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Describe the roof. Why do you think it was made this way?

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This model is made of clay. What materials do you think this house was made of in real life and why?

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### About the Han House:

Unlike grand royal or religious stone structures, very few ancient homes have survived intact. This could be because they were made of cheaper materials that deteriorated over time (like mud brick or wood). Luckily for historians, it was common for people to be buried with clay models of real-life homes for the deceased's soul to live. Penn Museum's model comes from the Han Dynasty in ancient China. It gives us a glimpse of what a house looked like 2,000 years ago. Read more about it [here!](#)

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## PART TWO: Explore Everyday Architecture

Take a walk or look out a window, what do the houses in your neighborhood look like? Look closely at about 3-5 houses and sketch or take a photo of what you see. Answer the questions below.

What were some things the houses had in common?

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Describe unique things you observed (windows, doors, or designs that made the homes stand out).

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What kinds of materials were the houses made of?

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What features would you say are typical of homes in your neighborhood?

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Use this space to draw a model house by combining your favorite parts of the houses you observed!

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## PART THREE: Create your Model House

Make a scaled-down model of a typical home in your neighborhood based on your drawing from part two. Use cardboard and other found materials from home and make sure you get help from an adult!

### What you will need:

1. Cardboard [cereal boxes, Shoe boxes, paper towel rolls, paper bags, and more]
2. Scissors
3. Ruler
4. Pencil
5. Box cutter and/or hobby knife\*\*\* Use extreme caution, remember to cut away from fingers and use a cutting board or other thick material underneath. Always cut with adult supervision.
6. Glue
7. Hot Glue *\*optional*. Use with adult supervision.

### Get Started:

1. You can make your model as simple or as detailed as you like. Begin with a pre-made box like a shoe box or you can build your own structure out of the cardboard you found. You might want to just make the front of the house, it's up to you! There is no wrong way to build your model, but here are some tips to help.



**Tip 1:** Draw the shapes of the windows you want to cut and use a ruler to help guide your hobby knife. Glue windowpanes or blinds behind the cut out to create depth!



**Tip 2:** To make a hinge, use a hobby knife and cut only halfway into the cardboard, so it bends but is still attached. This is called scoring. Use this technique to create roofs, balconies, doors, or awnings that can easily attach to your house using glue.



**Tip 3:** Cut out shapes and glue to the surface of your model to create interesting textures like brick work or roof details.