

Build Together

Work together to create a unique building that includes a certain number of features, such as stairs, towers, doors.



Materials

- Building blocks or other building materials
- Photographs or pictures of buildings or individual structural features (e.g., stairs, towers, arches, etc.) (*TIP:* You can use your own photographs of buildings with which children are familiar.)

Setup — Less than 5 minutes

- Before you begin the activity, choose what building feature(s) to focus on and how many of each feature to build. On a piece of paper or on the board, write the number next to the feature, such as 2 towers or 4 windows. (*TIP:* Adjust the number and complexity of features to meet your children's skill levels.)
- Print or display one or more pictures showing the structural features you want children to replicate in their own buildings.
- Distribute the blocks or building materials.

Instructions

1. Children work together in pairs or groups of three to construct a building that includes the features in the pictures.
2. Look at the pictures of buildings and tell children what items and how many of each item to include in their buildings (e.g., 4 walls, 2 doors, and 1 ramp).
3. The teacher checks in periodically with the children to determine whether they are building according to the requirements.

Checks for Understanding

To deepen children's learning about early math concepts, talk and ask questions while doing this activity together. Here are some examples to get you started:

Relative Position

- “What did you build above/below the window?”
- “Without pointing, tell me where you put the door?”
- “What's your plan for building the window? Where is there space to put it? Talk to each other to figure out where to build it.”

Cardinality

- “How many blocks do you need to make the right number of ramps?”
- “How many windows do you have in your building?”

Shapes in the Environment

- “What block looks like the column in the picture?”
- “What shapes make the top of the tower in this picture? How could you make a similar shape using these blocks?”



Activity Modifications

Here are some other things you can do to keep the activity engaging and challenging all year long:

Give It a Theme

- **Castle Construction:** Imagine that a king and queen have given you a list of features they want in their castle (e.g., staircase, tower).
- **Construction Site:** Children are construction workers who need to decide what items and how many of each item to include in their buildings.

Make It Harder

- Give two or more groups of children the same set of features to build. Compare how their creations are different and the same. Did they include all of the required features?
- No pictures! Instead, tell children verbally the multi-step requirements (e.g., “2 windows beside the door,” “The door should be 3 blocks away from the arch”).

- Assign one child to be the lead inspector/engineer. They check in with other children about the type and number of structural features.
- Have children roll a die to determine the number of features they will build (“How many ramps? Now how many stairs?”) and write down the number.

Increase Peer Collaboration

- Assign each child to be responsible for a different set of blocks (e.g., “Carlo has all the cylinders, Violet has all the cones”).