Make it: a pencil tray, with a wait test

Ages 6 to 8, with a grown-up.

A three-piece tray (one base, two sides, two joints) and a wait test on scrap. The grown-up cuts the wood and starts the nails. You sand, glue, clamp, wait and tap.

The grown-up's job

- Cuts the wood and starts every nail. Your hand goes over your child's on the hammer; your free hand stays clear of the nail.
- Closes the clamps. Keep fingers out of the jaws.
- Stays for the whole project.

Tools and parts



Three smooth softwood pieces, cut by the



Scrap wood



Wood glue



Two clamps



Sandpaper and a sanding block



Small hammer



Four short thin nails, shorter than the two



Safety glasses



Damp cloth



A timer or a sunny window as a clock

Steps

1. Glasses on. Clear the bench. Radio low.



2. Sand every piece. Rub the way the wood runs. Round the corners until they feel like a pebble. Wipe off the dust.



3. Wait test, on scrap. Glue two scrap joints. Clamp one. Leave the other on the bench.



4. With the grown-up's hand over yours, tap the one that is not clamped. Watch what it does. This one is for finding out.



5. Glue the tray: a thin line along the base's edges, sides pressed on, squeeze-out wiped with the damp cloth.



6. Clamp it, check the sides are straight, then wait. Read the glue label for how long to leave it clamped and write that time where you can see it.



A grown-up stays for the whole project. Free for personal and classroom use. Not for resale.

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7 When time is up, take the clamps off. The grown-up starts four nails, two on each side, holding each with pliers or a clothespin so small fingers stay clear.



8 You tap each nail in, the grown-up's hand over yours. Fill the tray with pencils. Does it hold? If not, that is what scrap is for. Glue again and wait longer.



While you wait

The glue is working; you are not. Sand a spare piece smooth. Sweep the bench. Sort the nails by size. Play Hold and Now: the grown-up says "Hold" and everyone freezes; the grown-up says "Now" and everyone moves.

Safety for grown-ups

- Stay for the whole project. Nothing is for working alone.
- Eye protection for everyone while tools are out.
- You cut the wood and start every nail. Keep your free hand clear of the nail.
- Keep fingers out of the clamp jaws; the grown-up closes the clamps.
- Small parts and choking: nails, short ends and scraps are small parts. Keep them away from mouths and from children under 4. Sweep up any dropped nail right away.
- Glue: follow the label, fresh air, no tasting, wipe up spills, wash hands after.
- Sanding: brush dust away and wipe with a damp cloth; wear a dust mask made for the job, and sand outdoors or by an open door.
- Check scrap and finished pieces for splinters.
- Clamp times differ by glue. Always use the time on your glue's label, not a guess. A wood-glue joint keeps gaining strength for about a day, so nothing heavy goes in the tray yet. (Source: Titebond FAQ and brochure.)

A fact to check

For most wood glues, an unstressed joint should be clamped for about thirty minutes to an hour and a stressed joint for 24 hours. The glue label gives the time for each product. (Source: Titebond.)

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