



Upcycled LED Tea Light Houses

By: Creativity for Kids®



Level of Difficulty: Intermediate - This craft is fun for the whole family, from ages 5 years to adult. Younger children will need help from an adult when using the Xacto™ knife, while kids 9+ may be able to do this craft with little or no assistance. If you have any questions, please click on Contact Us on our website and we will respond as quickly as possible.

Estimated Completion Time: Approximately 30 – 60 minutes per house.

List of Materials you will Need:

- Grocery Boxes – You need 1 box for each house, plus part of a box for each roof. Use small sizes like mac & cheese, tea, taco shells, etc. that are at least 1.5” deep, big enough for the tea lights. Cereal boxes are generally too big.
- LED Tea Lights – 1 for each house
CAUTION: Do NOT use real tea light candles inside paper houses!!
- Decorative Paper – enough to cover all your boxes – we reused paper shopping bags or you can use scrapbook, construction or wrapping paper.
- Washi Tape and/or Decorative Paper Scraps – little bits of contrasting colors for the doors, shutters and wreath
- Scissors
- Double-sided Tape
- Xacto™ Knife - **Only with adult supervision**
- Glue Stick
- Pencil
- Optional: Triangular Styrofoam Shapes for roofs



Introduction:

This is a wonderful family craft where everyone can participate in creating an heirloom decoration that will be cherish for years to come. Just gather all your materials and everyone can make one house and when you put them altogether you have a village! If you have an Xacto™ knife or other cutting tool you can make the full light-up version as shown above, or we also provide a no-light version that is quicker and easier and only requires scissors, no knife.

Our example shows one style, but the creative possibilities are endless - you can frost the roof with glitter/snow, add trees, Christmas lights, chimneys...if you each make a house and still want to do more, ask the kids to think about other buildings in the community and how they could make these, like stores, the school, the library, a church. When you're all done you can create a miniature village on a side table – an activity that the kids will LOVE to help set up and play with throughout the holidays.

Directions:

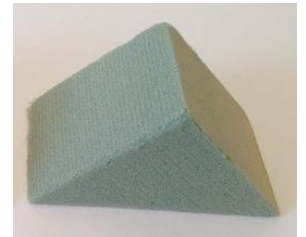
Step 1 - The House: Carefully open the food boxes, remove the food, and then reseal the boxes with double-sided tape. You will need one box for each house. Boxes can be used standing up or on their side, experiment, and decide how you want each house to sit.

Step 2: Choose the paper you want to use for the color of your house and cut a piece large enough to wrap fully around the house. You don't need to cover the bottom or the top of the box, just the four sides. Use a glue stick or double-sided tape to attach the paper to the box. Our smallest grey house is actually a Tazo™ tea box turned inside out! They print this lovely pattern on the inside of their boxes, so we carefully took the box apart and reconstructed it inside out... no need to wrap this one!



Step 3 - The Roof: Each house will need a triangular piece of box or Styrofoam. For our two larger houses we used one food box cut apart on the diagonal. First cut two big triangles off opposite corners and cut the remaining box into wide strips. The strips should be the same width as the original box. Tape the strips to the open side of the triangles to stabilize them and to create solid roof forms that can sit on top of the houses.

For the smaller box we used a piece of Styrofoam cut to fit the smaller box. The roofs look best if they slightly overhang the houses, so make your triangles slightly larger than the tops of the houses.



Step 4: Choose the paper you want to use for the color of your roof. Cut and wrap the paper so that all sides are fully covered and use glue stick or double-sided tape to attach the paper to the roof. Set your roof pieces on your house pieces to make sure they look good together, but don't attach yet. Set the roof pieces aside while you work on the fronts of your houses.



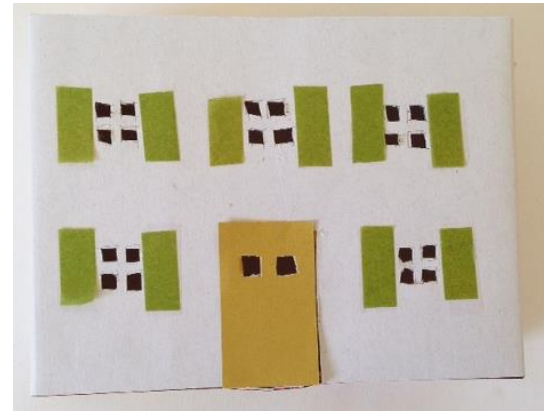
Step 5 - Doors & Windows: Use a pencil to lightly draw a door and window panes on the front of each house. Cut a piece of decorative paper for your door and glue this in place.

Step 6 - NO LIGHT Version: If you don't have LED tea lights or an Xacto knife, or you just want an easier project, try this method. Instead of cutting holes for the window panes cut little 1/4" squares from bright gold or yellow paper. Glue these to the front of your house over the window pane pencil markings. Or you could even use gold paint. Experiment and have fun doing it your way!



Step 6 – LED Tea Light Version: Use an Xacto™ knife to roughly cut square window panes along your pencil markings. **Parental supervision is required when using the knife.** Note, the pencil markings are just a rough guide and the cuttings do NOT need to be perfect. If you want perfect you should use a ruler and a pencil and a very sharp blade, but notice that even just the suggestion of a square window pane is good enough and creates a whimsical effect – see our example! ☺

If you find it too challenging to cut these tiny window panes (each about ¼” square), then try this technique: Cut each window whole without panes, approximately ¾” square. Then create the window pane separation with thin strips of paper, each approximately 1” long by 1/8” wide. Cut two of these and paste them across the center of the window hole, one vertical and the other horizontal. Paste or tape to the inside of the box, so there’s no mess on the front.



Step 7: Cut little strips of Washi tape or decorate paper for the shutters and stick these to either side of each window.

Step 8: On the backside of each house cut a “door” for your LED light. This needs to be approximately 1.5” square and near the bottom of the house/box. This is where you will slide the LED light in and out, to turn it on and off.

Step 9 - Assemble: Apply double-stick tape to the top of your house and attach the roof. Add any special touches you’d like – see the wreath we added to our tall house.



The Village: Cover a table with a white cloth. Create the big elements for your town, like a small pond (made from tin foil), or a main street (drape a nylon in a swath or cut sandpaper in street sized strips), or a big sledding hill (use layers of poly or wool stuffing). Get white poly quilt batting or stuffing (or fake snow in rolls) from the craft store and use this to create layers of snow, rolling over everything up to the edges of the pond and street to create snow banks. Place your houses along the street and around the pond. Get or make trees - pine cones painted green do nicely! The kids will really get into this and will find little toys and figurines and stones and branches to turn it into a lively tableau. At night turn the LED lights on and the whole village will magically light up!

We would love to see what you create!

