



# Parade Float Crash Course

# What Do You Need



## Place To Work

Before you begin, you need to identify a place where you can actually build your float. Obviously, a neighbor with an open garage and a large driveway is a natural choice. You can expect the float building to take anywhere from 2-4 weeks. Be certain you have good outside access to electricity.

## Tools

You are also going to need a variety of tools: a table or circular saw, saber saw, handsaw, hammers, staple guns, and a well-stocked tool box with screwdrivers, pliers, utility knife, etc., and a long tape measure and carpenter's square. Other tools certainly will be needed if you're going to add animation or special effects to your float.



Also, plan for protection from the weather, especially in the later stages of construction. Once you get into the decorating phase, you will need a few large sheets of plastic that can be carefully placed over your float and fastened securely. Before that, you probably will be able to pull the float back into the garage each night for protection.

# What Do You Need

## Chicken Wire / Sheeting

For areas on your float that require a lot of shape, use chicken wire molded around steel tubing or a wood frame in your desired shape and cover with paper or burlap. Use spray glue for the paper or hog rings for the burlap. This will be demonstrated in one of our float classes.



## Papier-mâché



Papier-mâché is another method used for areas on your float that require great detail in shape, or for contrast against the softer look of floral sheeting. The papier-mâché process involves creating a chicken wire frame and then covering it with several layers of newspaper soaked in a mixture of flour and water. Be sure to plan ahead because it takes several days before it will dry enough for you to paint it.

When the papier-mâché has dried, it's a flour and 1/2 cup water) until you get a thick glue-like consistency. Add a bit more water if it's too thick. Mix well with a spoon to get rid of all the bumps. Add a few tablespoons of salt to help prevent mold.

# What Do You Need



## Spray paint

One of the greatest tools you can use in the pursuit of a true professional look is spray paint. In the hands of a person with some artistic talent, spray paint can be used to add shading, shadowing and highlights and to add color that may not be available in other float building products.

Be certain the paint is compatible with the materials on your float. Standard aerosol paints will actually melt plastic and Styrofoam. Special paints are available at Craft Stores.



# What Do You Need

## Lettering

Letters are almost always used in some form on floats. You can make your own from materials such as paper, Styrofoam or wood. Modern Display can also create custom lettering on a special order basis. Contact Monet Young for specifics and prices.



Some general considerations for lettering include:

- Contrast between the letter color and the background color.
- Size/viewing distance - make all lettering as large as possible, ask yourself, "Will a parade spectator be able to read it from 20 to 40 feet away?"
- Font/typeface - keep it simple and legible. Script lettering is rarely used in informational signage for good reason.

Ready-made letters and paper letters are 2-dimensional, but they can be quite effective when used on the proper background and covered in sparkling

# What Do You Need

## Lettering

Styrofoam letters are cut from sheets of building insulating materials that can be inexpensively obtained from many lumber yards and building supply centers. It is available in several thicknesses and produces letters that are 3-dimensional and can be mounted on a wide variety of surfaces. In addition, the Styrofoam is light and very easy to cut. Craft stores carry a number of paints, which are safe for Styrofoam. You can install the letters with drywall ring shaker nails by simply pushing them through the chicken wire or cardboard and into the back of the letters.



Finish off the letters with glitter. Again keep in mind the contrasting color of the base where they will be mounted. This insures your lettering will stand out and be read.

\*Modern Display offers a variety of colors and 2 sizes of glitter that make you message stand out and gleam.

Glitter Colors (some colors may be discontinued and or new colors added)  
Light Gold, Medium Gold, Chartreuse, Copper, Golden Bronze, Fire Red, Burgundy (Hot Pink), Lavender, Violet Purple, Parrot Green, Dark Green, Ocean Spray, Roman Blue, Sapphire Blue, Poly Glass, Metallic Grey, Black Magic, Bright Silver, Antique Copper, and more. [Shop glitter online.](#)

# Covering The Float



## Step 1

Prepare the completed deck for new covering. Make sure all tools and loose building materials are removed from the covering area.



## Step 2

Roll out the floral sheeting carefully to maximize usage of the material. Try to lay all pieces going the same direction



## Step 3

Staple sheeting (or glue) to the decking or prop. Staple every few inches to insure proper coverage. Overlap the seams from front to back so the wind will not lift up the sheeting.



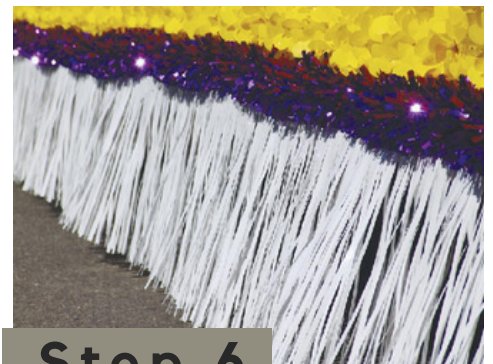
## Step 4

Twist (festooning) adds the perfect edging for finishing off the edges of props and your float. This adds detail and texture.



## Step 5

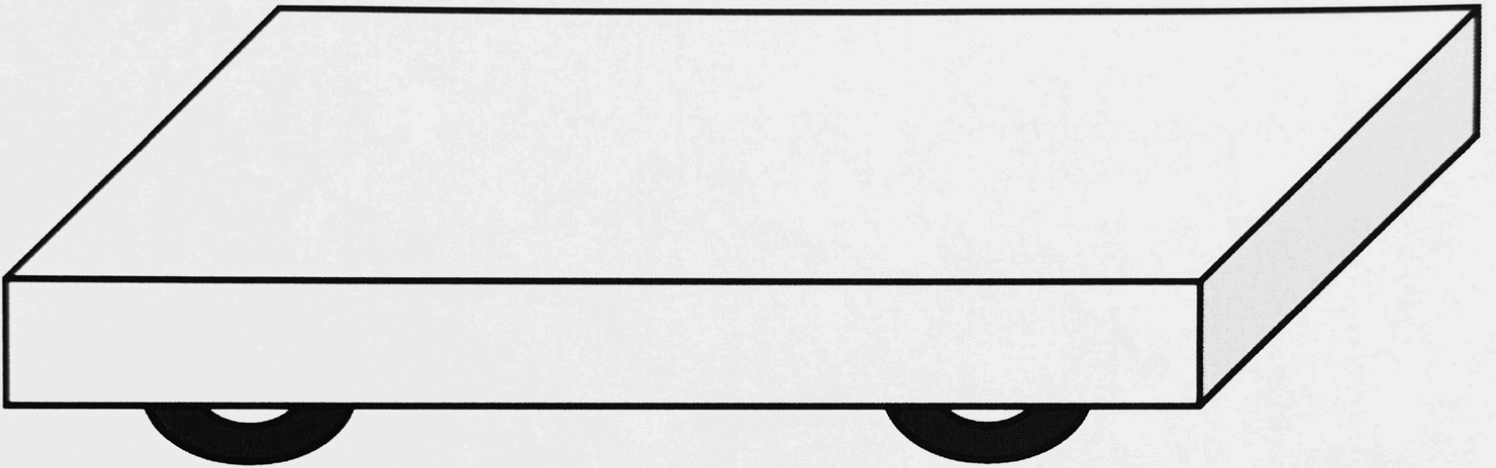
Staple Fringe after the float is finished with all other coverings. Some say to add the fringe at the parade so it stays nice and undamaged



## Step 6

Last but not least, attaching twist along the top edge not only covers the staples of the fringe but gives it a finished touch.

# Sheeting Calculation



## Floral Sheeting (in feet)

Length \_\_\_\_\_ X Width \_\_\_\_\_  $\div 9 =$  \_\_\_\_\_

## Festooning (above fringe)

Length \_\_\_\_\_ + Width \_\_\_\_\_  $\times 2 \div 25 =$  \_\_\_\_\_ (round up to 25' units)

## Fringe

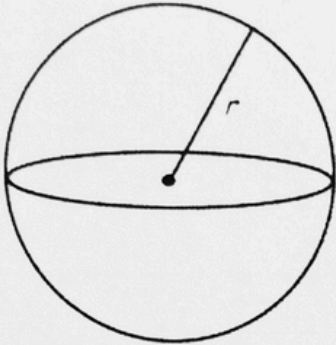
Length \_\_\_\_\_ + Width \_\_\_\_\_  $\times 2 \div 10 =$  \_\_\_\_\_ (round up to 10' units)



## Sphere

Surface Area

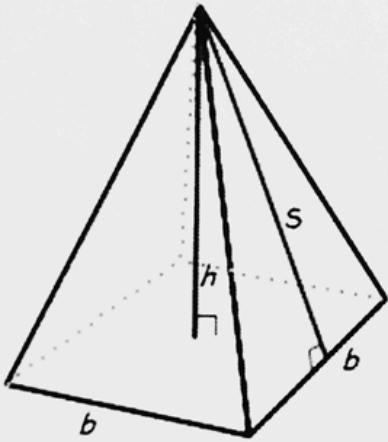
$$A = 4\pi r^2$$



## Square Based Pyramid

Surface Area

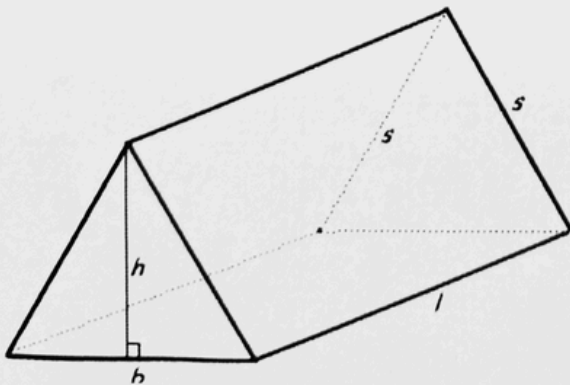
$$A = 2bs + b^2$$



## Isosceles Triangular Prism

Surface Area

$$A = bh + 2ls + lb$$



## Cylinder

Surface Area

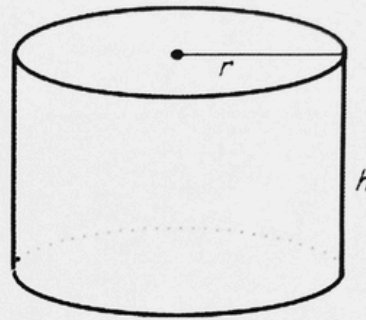
We will need to calculate the surface area of the top, base and sides.

Area of the top is  $\pi r^2$

Area of the bottom is  $\pi r^2$

Area of the side is  $2\pi rh$

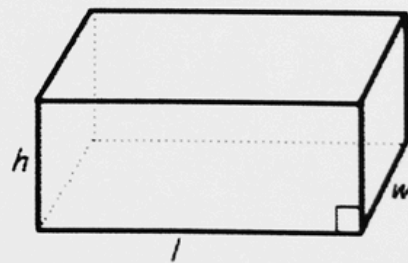
Therefore the Formula is:  $A = 2\pi r^2 + 2\pi rh$



## Rectangular Prism

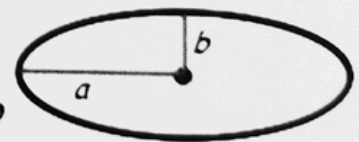
Surface Area

$$A = 2(wh + lw + lh)$$



## Ellipse

Surface Area =  $\pi ab$



$$C = 2\pi r$$

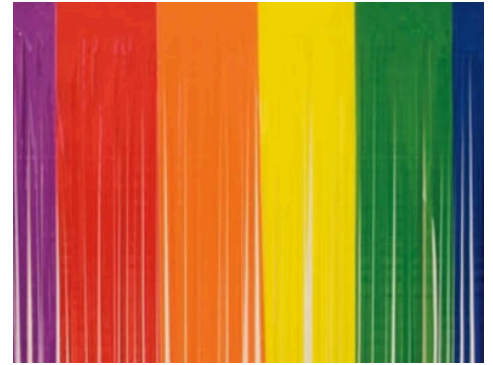
# Shop Online



**Festooning**



**Floral  
Sheeting**



**Fringe**



**Glitter**



**Glue**



**Atlas Foam**

Thank you for reading the crash course on parade floats. Please email us at [monet@moderndisplay.com](mailto:monet@moderndisplay.com) if you have any questions or would like to reserve Modern Display for your upcoming parade.