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## EC5519 Toys you can Make

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# Toys You Can Make



The University of Nebraska Agricultural College Extension Service  
and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating  
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

# Toys You Can Make

BY ANGELINE C. ANDERSON

How carefully do you choose your tools? Do you always choose the most expensive equipment to do the best work? No, because you have found that this is not always necessary. Play is the child's work; therefore, it is important that his toys, which are his tools, be carefully chosen. Since the small children attending the Child Development Laboratory at the University of Nebraska thoroughly enjoy home-made toys and equipment, the writer is happy to pass on to others some of her experiences in making home-made toys. While this bulletin gives suggestions mainly for toys for younger children, some of them may be adapted for older children. They may also be suggestive for constructive material for older brothers and sisters; then, too, there are grandpas and grandmas and uncles and aunts. How nice it is for them to make some toys for the little folks. Children are much happier while visiting if there is something for them to do.

In the average home, many excellent playthings may be found in materials already at hand. Most children enjoy old clothes, colored cloth, spools, buttons, and bits of anything. These are valuable because they encourage resourcefulness and stimulate the child's play. Most of the materials for the toys and equipment described in this bulletin may be found at home. If not, they may be easily and inexpensively acquired.

When you select commercial toys or make toys at home, analyze them to see if they are desirable toys. Desirable toys should be suited to the child of a particular age. If they are too simple you may encourage the child to be lazy. If they are too difficult he will be discouraged with his efforts. Mechanical toys are too limited. They create a desire to be entertained; only "do with" toys encourage resourcefulness and stimulate activity. They should also be safe (avoid poor paint, sharp edges and corners, rough surfaces, etc.), easily cleaned, and durable (cheap, breakable toys develop carelessness). It is wise to let all of the members assist in planning and constructing the equipment and in this way keep the whole family happily and profitably employed.

## INDOOR EQUIPMENT

**Cupboards.**—It is desirable to have a toy cupboard which is accessible to the child. A box or a basket may be used in which to store toys but the desired toy is usually at the bottom and this necessitates removing all the toys in order to play with a certain one. Here you have a splendid opportunity to teach your child orderliness, so why not provide suitable cupboards for toys and books? The child can then be responsible for putting his toys away when he is through playing. Orange crates make splendid cupboards and may be arranged in several ways. The orange crate may be placed on end as shown on the cover page. By the addition of



extra shelves, this crate was made into a bookcase. Four wooden door stops were used for the legs. Other arrangements are suggested in Figures 2 and 3.

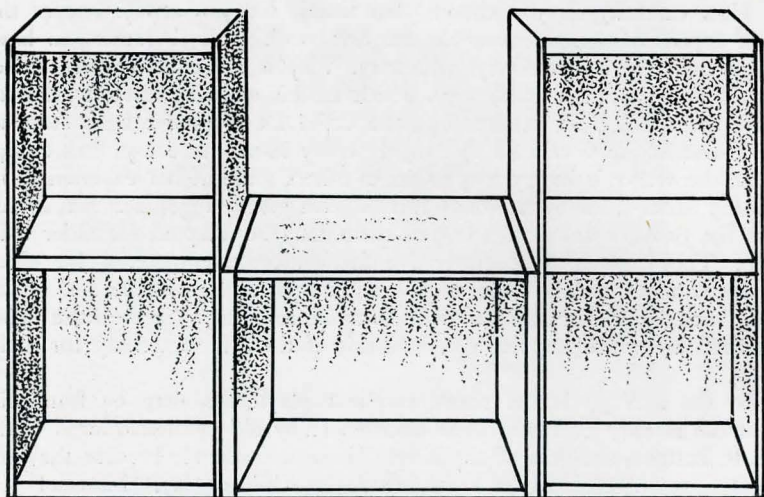


Figure 2

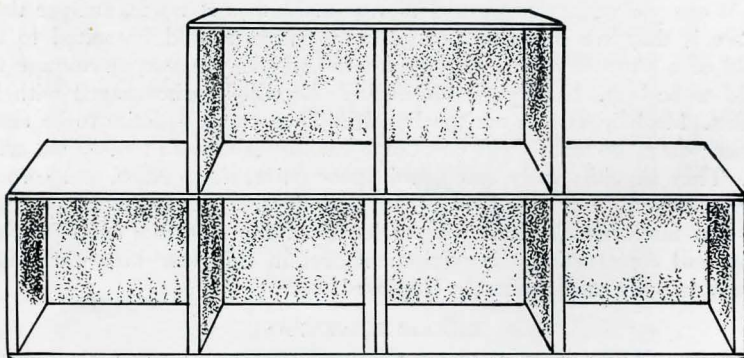


Figure 3

By using a mirror over the small box in Figure 2, a charming and useful dressing unit can be made with sufficient space for the child's clothing. All of these cupboards can be painted or covered with heavy wrapping paper or wall paper. If paper is used, it is well to tack a strip of cloth over the open space in each cupboard to avoid having the paper tear too easily. Curtains can be made out of inexpensive washable cotton material, or clean gunny sacks trimmed with a gay print make attractive curtains. (Fig. 10.)

**Chairs for Small Children.**—Chairs may also be made out of orange crates. The seat, arm rest, and back should be made to suit the individual child. The center division board forms the seat and should be lowered so the child can sit with his feet flat on the floor. The back and arm rests should be reinforced with some of the pieces that are sawed off to make the arm rests. (See Fig. 4.) These chairs may be painted and decalcomania designs applied. These are specially prepared designs for painted surfaces and can be purchased in most paint stores. Animals made from colored paper may be glued to the chair and shellacked when thoroughly dry. Patterns for these animals can be selected from appliqué designs. (See Fig. 1.) These chairs may also be padded, and removable attractive slip covers made for them from washable cotton material. (See Fig. 1 and cover page.)

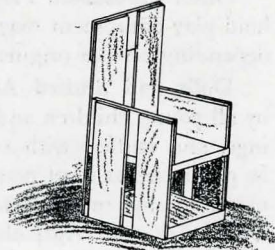


Figure 4.

**Tables.**—The child should be provided with a table on which to do his work. A good size is 20" x 30". The size of the child should govern the height of the table.

#### INDOOR TOYS

**Doll's Cradle.**—Two baskets are used (Fig. 5). Stand A on end inside of B to form the canopy. Remove the metal hooks from two wooden coat hangers. Fasten the wooden bows securely to the bottom of basket B to make rockers. The cradle may be painted or covered with a washable slip cover.

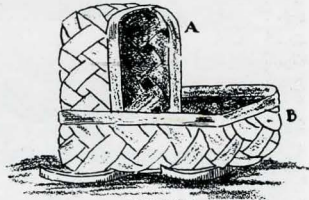


Figure 5.

**Doll's Bed.**—The bed illustrated is a simple one to make. The builder can make one which is much more complicated. He should remember, however, that the bed must be durable. The ends of this bed are made from the ends of orange crates which have been curved with a coping saw. The sides and slats are made from scrap lumber. This bed is 12" x 22". (Fig. 6.)

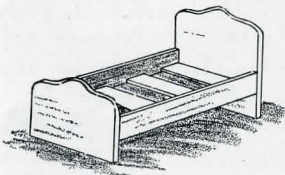


Figure 6.

**China Cabinet.**—A satisfactory toy china cabinet may be made by standing an orange crate on end and sawing it in half lengthwise to the middle division board. Some of the dis-

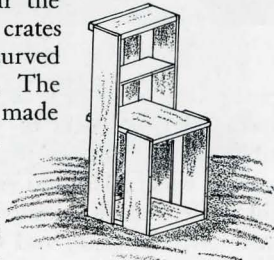


Figure 7.



carded part may be made into a shelf for the top part of the cabinet. (Figs. 1 and 7.)

**Other Household Play Equipment.**—Stoves, dressers, and other household play equipment may be made from boxes of varying shapes and sizes, depending on the originality of the builder. (See Fig. 1.)

**Dolls and Stuffed Animals.**—Dolls and stuffed animals are enjoyed by all young children and can easily be made from scraps of cloth or stockings, and stuffed with cotton or rags. If patterns are needed they may be purchased at most pattern counters. (See Fig. 1.) Excellent suggestions may be found in the Extension bulletin, Supplement 2, "Christmas Handicraft." Ask your Agricultural or Home Agent for this bulletin or write to the Agricultural Extension Service, College of Agriculture, Lincoln, Nebr.

**Doll House.**—Most children enjoy sharing in the making of a doll house in preference to a beautifully furnished ready-made house. Several boxes which are of the same size may be arranged to form the rooms of the house. Doors and windows can be cut to suit the owner. It is wise to leave the two opposite sides open in order that the furniture may be placed easily. The outside may be painted with glue, and dipped in sand, and then painted to give the appearance of a stucco house. (Fig. 8.)



Figure 8.

Furniture for the doll house may be made out of paper or cardboard. Berry baskets, cigar boxes or cardboard boxes can be used for various types of furniture; the legs can be made easily by clipping clothespins on the boxes or baskets (Fig. 9A). Furniture can also be made out of spools (B) or blocks of wood can be glued or nailed together to make tables, chairs, etc. (C). More elaborate furniture can be whittled from smooth wood. This has endless possibilities for older children. One should aid in developing initiative in the children by encouraging them to make their own furniture and furnishings.

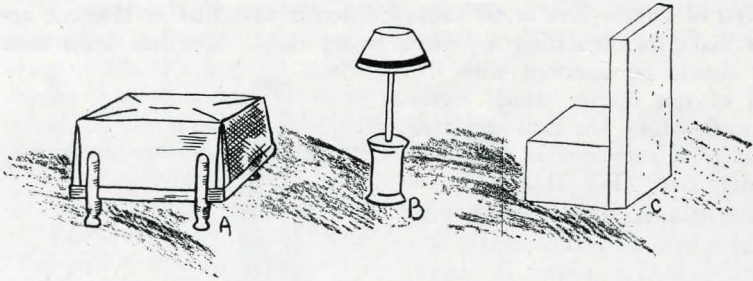


Figure 9.

**Blocks.**—An excellent set of blocks may be assembled by collecting small boxes such as cheese, yeast, and cigar boxes. It is easier to build with boxes if the lids are closed and nailed securely. Large wooden boxes, such as crates, packing boxes, etc., are excellent for outdoor building.

Interest in building may be stimulated by adding spools, cans with and without lids, mill ends for walks, windows, bridges, etc., and cobs for fences or animals. (Fig. 9.)



Figure 10.



**Nest of Cans.**—Five or six cans of different sizes that fit into one another make an interesting toy for a young child. The lids from these cans should be removed with the kind of can opener which leaves a smooth edge. The cans are more attractive if each one is painted a different color (Fig. 11).

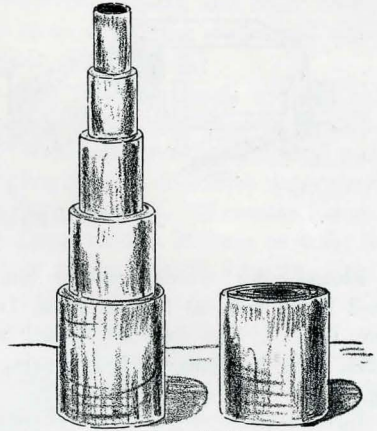


Figure 11.

**Peg Boards.**—These boards may be from 8 to 10 inches square and from  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in depth, depending on the pegs used. The ends from wooden boxes may be sanded and used. The holes for the pegs should be spaced at equal distances from each other; the depth depends again on the pegs used and varies from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches. Pegs may be used from round handles such as broom or mop handles. Clothes pins, meat skewers, rollers from adding machine paper, etc., make excellent pegs. Square pegs or a combination of square and round pegs may also be used. If skewers are used, the points should be removed. Holes may be spaced so that spools can be placed on each skewer (Fig. 12.) Peg boards are more attractive if the pegs are painted different colors.

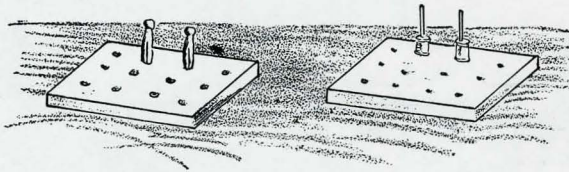


Figure 12.

**Beads.**—Spools and buttons make acceptable beads. These may be strung on shoestrings or cord. If cord is used a tip may be made by dipping one end of the cord in shellac. The spools are more attractive if colored. They may be painted or several dipped at a time in Easter egg dyes.

**Puzzles.**—Mount carefully chosen pictures on cigar box lids, heavy cardboard or three-ply wood. Allow these to dry thoroughly, then shellac. Cut the puzzle in two, three, or four parts. As the child gets older the puzzles may be further divided.



**Pyramid.**—In the center of a block of wood 6" x 6" glue a portion of a broomstick handle or doweling. This may be from six to nine inches in length. On this may be arranged graduated blocks of wood of the same shape or blocks of wood of the same size or blocks of various shapes and sizes. A hole should be bored in the center of each block which is large enough to permit the block to slide on the stick easily.

**Easel.**—Children enjoy painting and it is very nice to provide them with an easel. The older children like small brushes because they have learned to use their smaller muscles. The younger children use their large hand and arm muscles so it is wise to provide them with large brushes and large sheets of paper. The height of the easel depends on the height of the child. The easel illustrated in Figure 14 is 36" high and is suited to most four and five year olds. The face is 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 24". It is desirable to build it with a rack for the paints. A double easel may be constructed by placing a second face on the back frame.

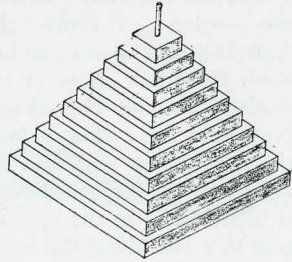


Figure 13.

**Clay.**—If commercial clay cannot be purchased and suitable modeling clay is not available, then make some "magic dough". To make this, combine two cups flour, one cup salt, and one-third cup water. This modeling material can be kept pliable for some time if it is stored in a can with a tightly fitting cover or in a damp cloth.

**Paper Folding and Cutting.**—Many happy hours can be spent with scissors (blunt scissors for young children), crayons, paste, and paper (either colored, plain, or newspapers). Sometimes a few suggestions from adults are needed. It would be impossible to give many suggestions in a short bulletin, so only directions for making a paper hat and star are included. These are always popular with children.

A paper hat can be made from a piece of newspaper or ordinary wrapping paper which is about 24 inches square. Fold it diagonally so as to make a triangle as shown



Figure 14.

in Figure 15-A and then fold up the corners *aa* down along the dotted lines to make B. Next fold the corners *aa* down along the dotted line *bb* as in C, and then fold them up again so as to make the feathers in the hat (Fig. 15-D). Now fold the corner *c* down along the dotted line *dd* and then fold again on line *bb* (see E). Corner *e* is then folded in the opposite direction to *c* but along the same dotted lines *dd* and *bb*. The hat is now completed (F). It can be decorated in red, white, and blue and used as a soldier cap or it can be decorated and used as a party favor.

A perfect five-pointed star is very difficult to draw or cut out, but by following these directions one can be cut very easily. Take a piece of paper which is square and fold it so it forms a rectangle (Figure 16-A). It would be well for the beginner to use a square that can be divided into thirds easily, as 3" x 3", 6" x 6" or 9" x 9". Place the folded edge toward you and mark the center of the folded edge *a*; at the top, place a point *b* which is one-third of the distance across the top (from right to left), connect these two points, and fold on this line from right to left to get B. Fold again, but this time from left to right to get C.

Now fold the lower edge under so that it is even with the fold marked *ac* in D. Now the final fold is made by folding the left hand side under again so it is even with the first line *ab* (E). Draw the dotted line as in E and then cut on this line, unfold, and you have a perfect five-pointed star.

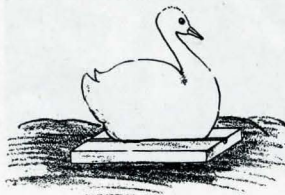


Figure 17.

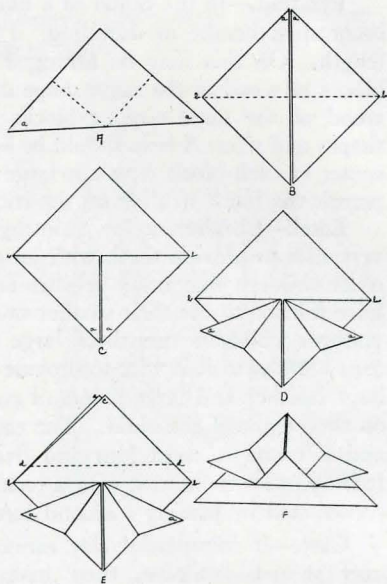


Figure 15.

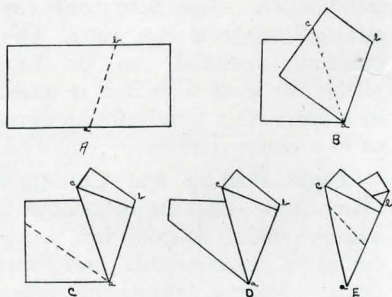


Figure 16.

**Animal Cut-Outs.**—Patterns of animals may be transferred to wood, beaver board, or card board and cut out and painted. To make the cardboard animals stand up, provide wood blocks with a saw cut in them as shown in Figure 17. If wood or beaver board is used, a pull toy may be made by mounting



the animals on a platform which has four wheels. These animal cut-outs also add interest to the child's play in the sand pile or with blocks.

**Noah's Ark and Animals.**—A very simple ark may be made by nailing a shoe box to a board a little wider than the box. The ark can be made more elaborate by shaping the board, by adding a roof to the shoe box, and by painting (Fig. 18).

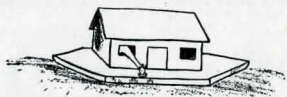


Figure 18.

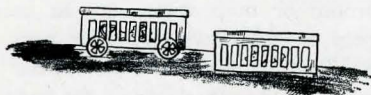


Figure 19.

Cut-out animals similar to those described above can be used in this ark, or animals made from corks or spools.

These animals can be used in a circus. Cardboard animals for the circus are more interesting if the legs are jointed by using tiny paper fasteners when attaching the legs to the body. The children can have an interesting circus parade by placing these animals in cages made of shoe boxes. These cages can be made more realistic by making bars on each side and painting the boxes with bright paint. (Fig. 19.)

**Train.**—Bread pans or tin pans ( $4\frac{1}{4}'' \times 7\frac{3}{4}''$  top measurement), in which the butcher sometimes receives his cold pressed meats, may be used for the train illustrated in Figure 20. Mount these tins on blocks of wood  $3\frac{1}{4}'' \times 7''$ . Mount a round cracker or cookie can on a similar piece of



Figure 20.

wood for the engine, and by using spools the engine can be made to appear more realistic. Large hooks and screw eyes are used to couple the engine and cars together.

**Sail Boats.**—Sail boats may be made easily from cigar boxes or scrap lumber of that thickness. Make the base of the boat (Fig. 21-A) about eight inches by three inches. Make one end pointed and out of the other end cut a rectangle  $2'' \times 1\frac{1}{2}''$ . This is where the paddle will be placed. The propeller paddles are made of two pieces of wood  $1\frac{1}{4}''$  square, each with saw cuts and slipped into each other (B). Slip a heavy rubber band over paddle and base of boat where the

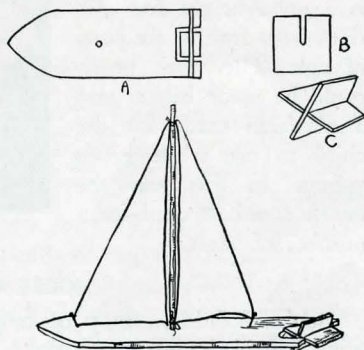


Figure 21.

paddle is to be placed (see A). Turn the paddle and twist the rubber band, set the boat in water and it will sail along. Sails may be made and decorated for this boat (Fig. 21).

**Hammer Board.**—The hammer board should be made of  $\frac{3}{4}$ " wood (Fig. 22). The ends of the hammer board illustrated (A and B) are  $4\frac{5}{8}$ " x 6" and are connected by a piece (C)  $4\frac{3}{8}$ " x  $9\frac{1}{2}$ " in which are bored two rows of holes; there should be four holes in each row. A child's old broom or mop stick may be used for the pegs or  $\frac{5}{8}$ " doweling. The pegs should be  $3\frac{1}{4}$ " in length. The holes that are bored must be the same size as the pegs. It is advisable to saw the pegs lengthwise about one half their diameter to give them "springiness" (see D); this is to avoid sticking. A hammer or small mallet must be provided.

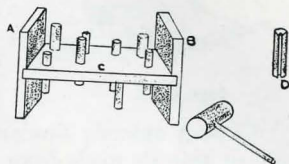


Figure 22.

When all the pegs have been hammered down through C, the board can be turned over and the pegs hammered again.

**Bean Bags.**—Bean bags may be made in any shape of closely woven material. A good size is 4" x 5". Beans, wheat, or corn may be used for the filling.

**Work Bench.**—It is desirable for boys to be provided with a good, substantial work bench. The first tools will be only a hammer and some nails, but others may be added as he grows older. All tools should be durable so that the child can get some results. The work bench in Fig. 23 is 23" x 48" and is 25" high, which is a good height for children from four to six years of age. The work bench could be made higher and a platform made for the child to use while he is young. In this way the bench could be used for a number of years.



Figure 23.

#### BOOKS AND PICTURES

**Books.**—Children may be taught to enjoy and appreciate books by being provided with good books. Good books can be made at home if



carefully selected pictures are used. The pictures should be simple and about things familiar to the child. He enjoys bright colors and some activity in the pictures. The pictures should be pasted carefully and it is wise to avoid overcrowding. The book may be made of heavy wrapping paper or cambric. The cover of the book may be made of the same material or of oilcloth or wall paper that does not have a large, bold design. The child will enjoy having his own books and book cupboard. (See cover page.)

**Pictures.**—In the child's room or in his own corner of some room where he keeps his toys, it is desirable to provide some pictures hung low for his enjoyment. Some of our modern artists are painting attractive pictures which are of interest to children and appear in some of our popular magazines. It is also possible to get some lovely reproductions of famous pictures. A single picture can be mounted on colored wrapping paper. (See Fig. 1 and cover page.) Three or five pictures may be combined for a panel picture. (Fig. 10.) The pictures should be glued on beaver board. It is wise to glue a paper on the back to prevent the picture from warping. Press the picture carefully and when thoroughly dry, shellac. A neat finish for a panel picture is attained by tacking  $\frac{3}{4}$ " wood strips at the edge of the beaver board.

#### RHYTHM INSTRUMENTS

If a child enjoys music, allow him to beat time with piano or radio music. It is wise to let him feel the rhythm himself. Provide him with two clothespins or with an empty oatmeal box and a clothespin. Two blocks of wood 4" x 5" covered with sandpaper make a most acceptable home-made rhythm instrument when rubbed together, keeping time with the music.

Place a few pebbles in a small box or can which has a tightly fitting lid. This makes a good rattle and one or two of these may be used for rhythms by shaking them. Children also enjoy experimenting with beating on different pans or blocks of wood. For these provide a felt-covered stick or small mallet.

#### OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT

All children should have sufficient outdoor equipment and should be encouraged to spend a great deal of time out of doors. When the weather permits, sun suits should be worn by the youngest children. Excellent suggestions for these may be found in "Ensembles for Sunny Days", Leaflet Number 63, and "Sun Suits for Children", Leaflet Number 24. Both of these are U. S. Department of Agriculture leaflets and each may be purchased for five cents from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. Another excellent bulletin on children's outdoor clothing is "Play Suits for Winter", Leaflet Number 54. This also

is five cents and may be purchased from the above address.

Children enjoy digging and it is desirable to provide them with a sand pile. A box should be built for the sand; the size of the box depends on the number of children playing together. A good size for one child is 4' x 4' and from eight to ten inches deep. The sand equipment need not be expensive. Old pans, cans (with smooth edges), spoons, etc., are sufficient for the child's imaginative play in the sand. If it is not possible for the child to have a sand box, allow him to dig in dirt in some designated corner that he may call his own.

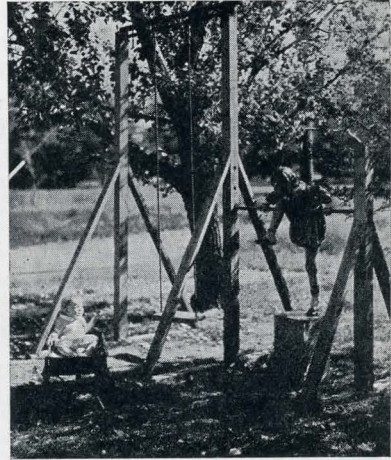


Figure 24.

Much of the outdoor equipment should provide for active exercise. Many children have natural resources at hand such as trees to climb or perhaps fences and gates on which to play. Make a survey of the natural equipment in your yard. If this does not encourage active exercise add

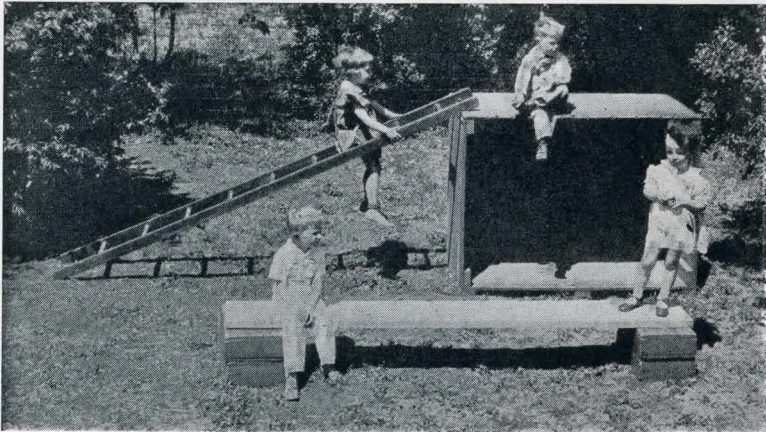


Figure 25.

some durable, simple equipment that can be adapted to the different kinds of play. The equipment need not be expensive or elaborate (Fig. 24). Children enjoy packing boxes, planks, and ladders, because these can be used in a great many combinations (Figs. 25 and 26). They also enjoy old tires, swings, teeters, etc. (Fig. 27). For more elaborate equipment,



write the Children's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor, Washington, D. C., and ask for Folder No. 2, "Backyard Playgrounds". This is a free bulletin.



Figure 26.



Figure 27.

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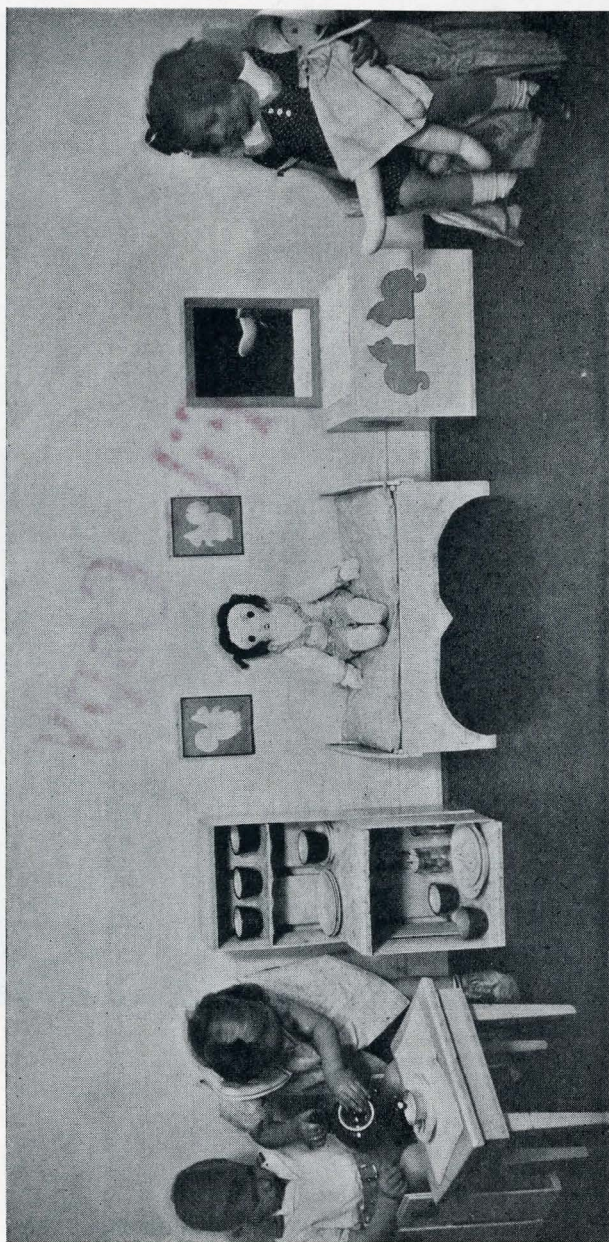


Figure 1.—Children enjoy housekeeping toys.