

# Young Engineers Club Curriculum

REVISION HISTORY			
NUMBER	DATE	DESCRIPTION	NAME

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# Introduction

Traditionally, education in the field of engineering is not made available to students until they reach the college level. Even though primary school students may not be prepared to handle the advanced science and mathematics that are the typical domain of the engineering disciplines it's never too early to apply engineering principles to solving problems.

The Young Engineers Club is open to all ages attending the Saratoga Independent School and will expose students to engineering fundamentals on a level they will find engaging and fun.

Each club meeting will briefly introduce an engineering discipline and then pose an open ended engineering challenge in that realm. Sometimes the whole club will work together to solve a problem, other times we will break out in to teams for some friendly competition. This self-directed problem based approach is an enjoyable way to foster engineering fundamentals such as innovation and original thought.

Engineering areas that we'll be exploring include: Acoustical, Aerospace, Architectural, Biomedical, Chemical, Computer Aided Design, Electrical, Mechanical, Naval, Optical, Robotics, Rocketry, Software and more. As the school year progresses, club members will add skills from earlier topics to their toolkit which they may bring to bear for solving more interdisciplinary challenges. If students develop an affinity to certain activities then we'll find ways to incorporate those activities into the various subjects that we cover. We'll also include tangential topics based on student interest.

Club members will be using tools that may typically be labeled "Keep out of reach of children" (e.g. cordless drill, soldering iron, etc.). We'll be sure to closely supervise as necessary but also promote empowering students to use tools safely and effectively. On days where we use tools we'll always start out by emphasizing safety procedures and make sure participants are wearing appropriate safety gear. Additional precautions will be taken based on age.

Occasionally we may ask students to bring in craft supplies, various recyclables or broken gadgets from home for use in the club. If you have a technological household item that you are going to throw away, consider hanging on to it to send in when called for so that we can explore some reverse engineering and disassembling skills.

Club meetings will be weekly occurring after school on Tuesdays. Parents are welcome to attend meetings to help with organization and safety but remember, please try to participate only as a passive resource. The process of trying to solve a problem without boundary is part of the joy of engineering. As difficult as it may be to watch your child try to do something the "wrong" way, this more often than not can lead to a very clever solution that you will find wonderfully surprising.

Finally, we may plan an occasional weekend meet up at local events that are of interest to the club (for example, FIRST LEGO tournament).

## Materials

Required materials are listed within each workshop description. Alternative supplies may be substituted or often you can improvise around not having supplies by adjusting the workshop activities.

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# **Part I**

## **Curriculum Workshops**

# Chapter 1

## Workshop 1: Intro to Engineering

2016-09-20
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First Day
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### 1.1 What is Engineering?

#### DISCIPLINES:

- Engineering Fundamentals

**Philosophy:** For this and all ensuing workshops, prioritize allowing the students to steer the direction. These workshops are guidelines for providing a medium for exploration but there's no need to hold fast to them. If the class is motivated to do something totally different, encourage this even if it's not part of the plan.

#### RESOURCES:

- [http://www-tc.pbskids.org/designsquad/pdf/parentseducators/DS\\_Act\\_Guide\\_complete.pdf](http://www-tc.pbskids.org/designsquad/pdf/parentseducators/DS_Act_Guide_complete.pdf)
- <http://www.mechatronics-mec.org/downloads/Engineering%20Notebook08.pdf>

#### MATERIALS:

- Large whiteboard and dry erase markers
- Tape (e.g. masking tape that will be easily removable from whiteboard)
- Index cards
- Computer workstation with internet access
- Make Magazines and/or similar
- Various gears and other engineering like gizmos
- 3-hole engineering graph paper
- Ruler
- Various stickers and coloring sheets of technical items for students to choose for personalizing their engineering notebooks.  
Example coloring sheet ideas:
  - Gears, pulleys, clocks, Rube Goldberg

- Vehicles: automotive, nautical, construction equipment, aerospace
- Instrumentation
- Computers
- Drafting symbols/stickers

**Location:** Indoor classroom/lab environment

**Preparation:** Write the challenge "What is engineering?" on the board.

Distribute the gears/gizmos, magazines and index cards across all the classroom tables. Don't offer direction one way or another whether the kids are allowed to touch these things. When they do start playing/reading don't make them stop when you move on to new activities.

Have a computer workstation set up and pointing at the webpage: <http://spacefem.com/quizzes/engineer/> During the challenge allow students to individually come up and take the quiz (with assistance if necessary). Have them log their results on the first page in their engineering notebook.

Consider starting the meeting seated among the students: "So, who's going to teach us today?". If there are any volunteers, see where it goes before taking formal charge.

Have the students assemble an Engineering Notebook. Notify club members before this first meeting to bring the necessary notebook supplies. They can use a notebook of their own choice suitable to their tastes (spiral bound, composition, binder, pocket folder with brads, etc.). Absent any strong student preference though, suggest a 1" 3 ring binder with 3-hole filler graph or engineering pad paper. This way paper can be used for scratch work as necessary while archival worthy pages can be placed in the binder.

Encourage doodling in their notebooks

**Challenge:** Pose the question "What is engineering?". Allow the discussion to be driven by the students. Invite the students to write down or draw something on the index cards that they think has to do with engineering. Let them make as many index cards as they want.

Also create cards (optionally extra large) with your own selection of engineering disciplines. My choices include: Acoustical, Aerospace, Architectural, Automotive, Biomedical, Chemical, Civil, Computer Aided, Electrical, Manufacturing, Marine, Mechanical, Optical, Robotic, Software

Place your cards up on the board and have the kids group their cards with the topical areas they think they fit with. You can connect categories with marker lines and/or have multiple cards made if they fit into several categories. Add categories as necessary. Try to use Venn diagrams to group things together.

Based on the results ask the students to pick some of their favorite cards and try to identify a discipline that they like. Have them log the result in their notebook and compare that to their quiz results. Have them put their name and date on the page.

Redistribute the notebooks so everyone has somebody else's notebook. Invite the students to report on whose notebook they got and what kind of engineer their colleague is. As a "peer review" then they can sign and date their name at the bottom of the page and return the notebook to the owner.

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## Chapter 2

# Workshop 2: Unsinkable Boat

2016-09-27
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### 2.1 Unsinkable Boat

#### DISCIPLINES:

- Naval Engineering

#### RESOURCES:

- [http://www-tc.pbskids.org/designsquad/pdf/parentseducators/DS\\_Act\\_Guide\\_complete.pdf](http://www-tc.pbskids.org/designsquad/pdf/parentseducators/DS_Act_Guide_complete.pdf)
- <http://pbskids.org/designsquad/parentseducators/resources/watercraft.html>
- [http://www-tc.pbskids.org/designsquad/pdf/parentseducators/DS\\_Act\\_Guide\\_Watercraft.pdf](http://www-tc.pbskids.org/designsquad/pdf/parentseducators/DS_Act_Guide_Watercraft.pdf)
- <http://pbskids.org/designsquad/build/watercraft/>

#### MATERIALS:

- 50 plastic straws per team
  - 1 roll of tape per team
  - 25 pennies
  - 5 paper cups per team
  - Plastic Wrap
  - Additional coins/washers
  - Large tub or large watertight storage bin
  - Stopwatch
  - Digital scale (or triple balance scale)
  - Internet Media Access
-

**Location:** Inside or outside on a warm day.

**Preparation:** Fill the tub with water.

**Demonstration:** Show the Design Squad video: <http://pbskids.org/designsquad/build/watercraft/>

**Teaming:** Teams of 2-3 making sure youngest are teamed with older student(s)

**Challenge:** Build a boat that can hold 25 pennies for at least 10 seconds before sinking

Give each team tape and straws and let them have at it. Have teams log their designs and results in their engineering notebooks. For those interested, try adding additional weight (coins and/or washers) to see how much their boats can take before sinking.

Students can weigh the coins/washers their boat held and log it in their notebook. If the scale is sensitive enough they might also weigh their boat.

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## Chapter 3

# Workshop 3: Paddle Power

2016-10-04
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### 3.1 Paddle Power

#### DISCIPLINES:

- Naval Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering

#### RESOURCES:

- [http://www-tc.pbskids.org/designsquad/pdf/parentseducators/DS\\_Act\\_Guide\\_complete.pdf](http://www-tc.pbskids.org/designsquad/pdf/parentseducators/DS_Act_Guide_complete.pdf)
- <http://pbskids.org/designsquad/build/paddle-power/>
- Design Squad Season 2, Episode 8: Aquatic Robots

#### MATERIALS:

- Large tub or large watertight storage bin
- Stopwatch
- Internet Media Access
- Per team:
  - Chipboard cardboard (such as a cereal box)
  - Plastic tape
  - 2 paper cups ( $\geq 8\text{oz}$ )
  - Plastic wrap
  - 5 rubber bands
  - Scissors
  - Straws
  - Washers
  - Dowels

**Location:** Inside or outside on a warm day

**Preparation:** Fill the tub with water.

**Demonstration:** Watch the Design Squad video when done. <http://pbskids.org/designsquad/build/paddle-power/>

Loop a 1x2" piece of cardboard through a rubber band hold taught between your fingers. Illustrate winding it up and letting it go to show how it spins.

Introduce potential (wound up rubber band) and kinetic energy (unwinding rubber band and spinning paddle).

CLASS INQUIRY:

- Where is the energy stored?
- How can the potential energy be increased?
- How can you tell when potential energy is being used?
- What are the different kinds of kinetic energy that occurs as the boat moves through the water?
- What other examples of potential and kinetic energy can you think of?

**Teaming:** Teams of 2-3. Partnering younger with older students.

**Challenge:** Build a boat that paddles itself using a rubber band as its power source.

Time how long it takes for the boat to travel across the tub. Have students keep records in their engineering notebooks.

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## Chapter 4

# Workshop 4: Block Tower Battle

2016-10-11

Meeting on 10/18 will be cancelled.

### 4.1 Block Tower Battle

DISCIPLINES:

- Architectural Engineering

MATERIALS:

- Large Building blocks
- Alternatively plastic cups, cut up 2x4's, paper/cardboard crafted blocks
- 10-20 foam balls or wiffle balls
- Tape measure
- Stopwatch
- TODO: materials for ball hurling contraptions

**Location:** Gymnasium or outdoors

**Preparation:** TODO: Locate some appropriate video on the topic

**Teaming:** Split the students into 2 evenly distributed teams or teams of 4-6 each.

**Challenge:** "Build the best structure for a variety of challenges"

If you have enough building blocks for all teams, they can build their architectural structures simultaneously. Otherwise one team can build their structure while the other teams constructs a ball hurling device that will be used to try to knock it down.

Start with a 5 minute limit. See who can build the tallest structure. Measure with a measuring tape and have the students make a schematic in their notebook of their structure and its dimensions.

If everyone was able to build their own structures at the same time then each team can be tasked with building it's own "wrecking ball" device to see who can knock down their tower with the fewest shots. Otherwise teams can pit their building against other teams wrecking contraptions. Be sure to encourage keeping track of the results in the students notebooks.

## Chapter 5

# Workshop 5: Spooky Engineering

**Further Challenges:**

2016-10-25

Last meeting before Halloween

### 5.1 Spooky Engineering

**DISCIPLINES:**

- Chemical Engineering

**RESOURCES:**

- <http://www.weareteachers.com/blogs/post/2013/09/17/spooky-science-ideas>
- <http://www.science-sparks.com/2012/09/20/spooky-lava-lamps/>
- <http://www.weareteachers.com/lessons-resources/details/diy-slime>
- <http://www.instructables.com/id/Oobleck/>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-Newtonian\\_fluid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-Newtonian_fluid)
- Vi Hart Scary Sierpinski Skull: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8ZWlUamNPI>

**Materials:** Per student:

- A clear plastic bottle or jar
  - A bottle of vegetable oil
  - Water
  - Alka Seltzer
  - Food colouring
  - 1 cup water
  - 1.5 - 2 cups corn starch
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- Large mixing bowl
- Silly Putty

**Location:** Classroom/Lab

**Teaming:** Individual or teams based on amount of supplies available.

**Challenge:** Perform some spooky Mad Scientist Experiments.

**Creepy Lava Lamp** Fill the bottle or jar a quarter full with water. Fill the rest with vegetable oil. After the separation between the oil and water settles add several drops of food coloring.

Add half an alka seltzer for a bubbling reaction. Add more bits of alka-seltzer to create a lava-lamp rising and falling of bubbles.

**Class Inquiry:** TODO: Education on reaction of alka-seltzer Discussion on density. Ask about why the oil and water separate. Can the class think of different density gasses?

**Oobleck** Non Newtonian fluid

Mix 1 cup water with 1.5-2cups corn starch and a few drops of food coloring in mixing bowl. Student's will have a Non Newtonian Fluid which acts like a liquid when poured but as a solid when touched.

**Class Inquiry** Unlike most fluids, a non-Newtonian fluid's viscosity is dependent on the shear rate it is exposed to. Silly Putty is another example. It will stretch and mold, but ball it up and throw it and it bounces.

**Further Challenges:** Prepare for a Ballistic Pumpkin challenge for the next meeting after Halloween. Have students bring in small pumpkins/Jack-O-Lanterns that may be launched across the field outside. Brainstorm some ideas for launching pumpkins. Watch some videos on Trebuchets and Pumpkin Squash contests.

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## Chapter 6

# Workshop 6: Ballistic Pumpkins

2016-11-01
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### 6.1 Ballistic Pumpkins

#### DISCIPLINES:

- Mechanical Engineering

#### RESOURCES:

- <https://www.punkinchunkin.com/>
- <http://www.sciencechannel.com/tv-shows/punkin-chunkin/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmSyrGsqqm8>
- <http://www.real-world-physics-problems.com/trebuchet-physics.html>
- MythBusters:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-Hwxw4fgqk>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-Hwxw4fgqk>

#### MATERIALS:

- Lots of garbage bags for cleanup
- TODO: slingshot/trebuchet building materials
- Small pumpkins
- $\geq 100$ ft long tape measure
- Lawn Marking chalk
- Online media access

**Location:** Large field outside.

#### PREPARATION:

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- Measure out 10ft increments in the field and mark with chalk

**Demonstration:** Show Punkin Chunkin documentary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmSyrGsqqmg8>

Show discovery channel video: <http://www.sciencechannel.com/tv-shows/punkin-chunkin/>

**Teaming:** Teams of 2-3 making sure youngest are teamed with older student(s)

**Challenge:** "Launch a pumpkin as far as possible"

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## Chapter 7

# Workshop 7: LEGO Engineering Challenges

**Further Challenges:**

2016-11-08

Resources: <http://www.bricklink.com/> <https://shop.lego.com/en-US/Pick-a-Brick> <https://education.lego.com/en-us/>

### 7.1 LEGO Engineering Challenges

**DISCIPLINES:**

- Mechanical Engineering

**RESOURCES:**

- <http://www.educatingyoungengineers.com/lego-clubs/>
- <http://www.educatingyoungengineers.com/s/lego-club-how-to-guide-cagr.pdf>
- <http://www.educatingyoungengineers.com/lego-club-activity-ideas>

**MATERIALS:**

- Assorted LEGO's ( $\geq 100$  pcs assorted per student plus multiple figurines)

**Location:** Classroom/Lab**Teaming:** Teams of 2-3 making sure youngest are teamed with older student(s)

## Chapter 8

# Workshop 8: Delicious Engineering

**Further Challenges:**

2016-11-15

Meeting on 11/22 may or may not be cancelled. Check with parents whether they want to cancel or not.

### 8.1 Delicious Engineering

**DISCIPLINES:**

- Math

**RESOURCES:**

- <http://www.evilmadscientist.com/2013/sconic-sections/>
- Vi Hart Cookie Shapes: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_n1126GoxbU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_n1126GoxbU)
- Vi Hart Fruit by the Foot: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Am-a5x9DGjg>

**MATERIALS:**

- TODO: Adjust quantities
- Cone shaped paper cups
- 4 cups flour
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 4 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 3/4 stick of butter, softened
- 1 cup milk

**Warning**

Identify any food allergies and accommodate appropriately

**Location:** Start in classroom and move to kitchen facilities.

**Preparation:** Write the challenge on the board.

Consider making the dough ahead of time so the class can form it and bake it more quickly.

**Class Inquiry:** Ask the class to come up with ideas for making edible things related to engineering.



**Important**

Discuss kitchen safety and cleanliness

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**Class Inquiry:** Show the Vi Hart Cookie Shapes video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_n1126GoxbU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_n1126GoxbU)

Fruit by the foot: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Am-a5x9DGjg>

**Teaming:** Whole class activity

**Challenge:** "Make engineering delicious"

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## Chapter 9

# Workshop 9: Acoustic Engineering

### Further Challenges:

2016-11-22



#### Important

Check with parents whether to cancel this meeting due to Thanksgiving Holiday.

Blue man group PVC pipe instruments: <http://makezine.com/projects/pvc-pipe-instrument/>

## Chapter 10

# Workshop 10: Past Challenges from FIRST LEGO League

2016-11-29

Field trip to Ballston Spa tournament over the weekend 12/3.

FIRST LEGO Challenges. Watch videos of past challenges.

## Chapter 11

# Workshop 11: Past Challenges from Odyssey of the Mind

2016-12-06
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Odyssey of the Mind videos and sample challenges.

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## Chapter 12

# Workshop 12: Bridge Building

2016-12-13
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Bridge Building Challenge



## Chapter 13

# Workshop 13: Engineering Challenges for the Holidays

2016-12-20

Last meeting before Christmas/New Years break. Meeting on 12/27 will be cancelled.

Light up ornaments, noise makers, acoustic engineering. Tone beat frequencies.

## Chapter 14

# Workshop 14: Reverse Engineering

2017-01-03
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Reverse Engineering. Bring in broken gadgets from home/COG to disassemble.

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## Chapter 15

# Workshop 15: Introduction to Electrical Engineering

2017-01-10
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Electrical, Snap Circuits, Little Bits, Breakout Boards, Power supplies.

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## Chapter 16

# Workshop 16: Electrical Engineering Projects

2017-01-17
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Make Makey, soldering, electrical engineering

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## Chapter 17

# Workshop 17: Software Engineering

2017-01-24

This deserves 2 workshops. Add a second one. The first one doesn't need a computer. Run challenges with Scratch programming using large foamboard cutouts of scratch command blocks, play Robot Turtle, get Marbles on Rails programming game put together.

For the second one prep by having kids get Scratch accounts wuth their parents. Next workshop will be in the computer lab.

Software engineering, coding, scratch, python, lightbot, TurtleArt

## Chapter 18

# Workshop 18: Computer Aided Design

2017-01-31
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CAD, OpenSCAD, OnShape, Inventor

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## Chapter 19

# Workshop 19: 3D Printing

2017-02-07
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3D Printing, Perler Beads, Foam Board layering, bring in printer, automation, plastics mfg.

## Chapter 20

# Workshop 20: Biomedical Engineering

2017-02-14

Meeting on 2/21 will be cancelled. Meeting is before valentines.

Biomedical engineering, 3D Printed hearts, Red blood siphon pump



## Chapter 21

# Workshop 21: Biomedical Optics

2017-02-28
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Biomedical engineering, Optical Engineering Monoculight Maker Faire Edition

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## Chapter 22

# Workshop 22: Optical Engineering

2017-03-07
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Optical Engineering, telescope, microscope, Rochester cloak, giant Fresnel lenses

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## Chapter 23

# Workshop 23: Mult-Disciplinary Engineering

2017-03-14
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LED light mixer, multi-disciplinary, LEDs, Optics, Electronics, 3D Printing

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## Chapter 24

# Workshop 24: Raspberry Pi Computer

2017-03-21
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Raspberry Pi

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## Chapter 25

# Workshop 25

2017-03-28
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## Chapter 26

# Workshop 26: Egg Olympics Design and Build

2017-04-04
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Egg Olympics build day. Egg drop, pine derby car. Zany categories: speed, force, egg survival, egg destruction

## Chapter 27

# Workshop 27: Egg Olympics Tournament

2017-04-11

Meeting on 4/18 will be cancelled Pre-Easter

Egg drop challenge Egg Olympics

## Chapter 28

# Workshop 28: Rocketry Design and Build

2017-04-25
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### RESOURCES:

- <https://www.apogeerockets.com/>
- <https://www.amazon.com/Estes-1980-Designer-Special/dp/B0084JTDOS> \$60
- <https://www.amazon.com/Estes-A8-3-Engines-Bulk-Pack/dp/B0006N6Z46> \$55
- <https://www.amazon.com/Estes-C6-5-Engines-Bulk-Pack/dp/B0006N6UIW> \$65
- <https://www.amazon.com/Estes-Wizard-Rocket-Bulk-Pack/dp/B009EZPF02> \$50
- <https://www.amazon.com/Estes-302215-Porta-Pad-Launch-Pad/dp/B0006NAQ78> \$15
- <https://www.amazon.com/Estes-2230-E-Launch-Controller/dp/B0006MZKG6> \$20

Rocketry, start build, Launch electronics

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## Chapter 29

# Workshop 29: Rocket Launch

2017-05-02
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**Rocket Launch** Zany contest categories: Longest air time, shortest air time, best crash, catch a recovery out of the air, loudest countdown, best decorated rocket, craziest flight pattern

## Chapter 30

# Workshop 30: Battling Robots Design and Build

2017-05-09
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Battling Robots build

## Chapter 31

# Workshop 31: Battling Robots Tournament

2017-05-16
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Battling Robots battle

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## Chapter 32

## Workshop 32

2017-05-23
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## Chapter 33

# Workshop 33

2017-05-30
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## Chapter 34

# Workshop 34: Engineering Showdown Games

2017-06-06

Last Day.

Engineering Showdown Games. Paper airplane challenge, egg toss etc. Challenges announced 15 minutes before each event. Each team then designs and constructs their entry before for competition.

## **Part II**

# **Supplemental Workshops**

## Chapter 35

# Supplemental 1: Siphon

### 35.1 Siphon

#### DISCIPLINES:

- Naval Engineering

#### MATERIALS:

- Large tub or large watertight storage bin
- 20ft of clear 1" diameter tubing
- Several large balloons
- Food coloring
- Step ladder

**Location:** Outside on a warm day near a water hose feed or in a lab/kitchen area with a large sink.

**Demonstration** Illustrate the workings of the siphon.

- Place the tub up on the step ladder and fill it with water.



#### Warning

STUDENTS MUST STAY CLEAR OF THE LADDER. A LARGE TUB OF WATER UP HIGH IS A FALLING HAZARD.

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- Fill the hose with water, block it with your thumb and take one end out to demonstrate siphoning.
  - Go to aim the end of the hose at the students but bring it up above the level of the tub as you do so and the water will stop flowing.
  - Bring the hose down to look into the end "Huh I wonder why it's not working" to get sprayed in the face for raucous laughter.
  - Partially block the tube output with your thumb to spray the water.
  - Ask the class if they think you can spray the water back up into the tub and show what happens.
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- Ask what will happen if an empty balloon is put at the end of the siphon. A balloon full of air? Hold the tube above the level of the tub to stop the flow of water and put a drop of food coloring in. Then try the different tests with the balloon.
- Fill the tube with water, add food coloring and plug it with your thumb. Bring it down below the level of the tub. Remove the end in the tub and allow some water to bleed out with your thumb so there is a large air gap on the tub side. Put the tube on the tub side back in the water. Ask the class what they think will happen when you remove your thumb and show them. Try it with different sized air gaps.
- Challenge the students for a way to get the siphon going without submerging the tube. If the water and the tube are clean enough, demonstrate sucking out the air in the tube to get the siphon started.

**Important**

WARN AGAINST ATTEMPTING THIS AS IT IS A CHOKING HAZARD AND SHOULD ESPECIALLY BE AVOIDED IF THE LIQUID IS TOXIC.

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- Alternatively if there is a hose available to backfill the tube (or make a water balloon that can be used to back fill the tube) this also will get the siphon going.
  - When demonstration is complete, drain the tub to a safe weight and take it down from the ladder.
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## Chapter 36

# Supplemental 2: Ramp Racers

### 36.1 Ramp Racers

#### DISCIPLINES:

- Mechanical Engineering
- Automotive Engineering

#### RESOURCES:

- <http://www.thingiverse.com/thing:1219729>

#### MATERIALS:

- Ramp. A large board or table that can be tipped at an angle. You may even task the students to come up with a suitable ramp.
- Building materials on hand like gears, wheels, Legos, K'Nex. Let the kids find what they may.
- Stopwatch
- Ball
- Slingmobiles: <http://www.thingiverse.com/thing:1219729>
- Board or otherwise improvised road block

**Location:** Classroom/lab with materials on hand for improvised construction

**Preparation:** Write the challenge statement up on the whiteboard. Don't call the "racer" a "car" and don't call attention to the fact that it doesn't have to be a car. Many students may start out building cars.

**Teaming:** Students may form teams or work individually

**Challenge:** "Build a racer that is the fastest down the ramp."

As students complete their builds use the stopwatch to time their racer down the ramp. They should record each time in their engineering notebook. They are free to modify their racer and try again. Changes and new trial times are good details to keep records of in their notebook. Keep a leader board of times.

Ask them to review their notes to identify the changes that made the best improvement to their times.

#### CLASS INQUIRY:

- Why does the racer go down the ramp?
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- What is gravity?
- Put a car sideways on the ramp. Why doesn't it go down the ramp?
- What is friction? Where is the friction? (High friction where the wheel meets the ramp, low friction on the wheel axles).
- Can anyone come up with a racer that will slide (instead of roll) down the ramp?
- How will larger or smaller diameter wheels affect the racer?

#### FURTHER CHALLENGES:

- Facilitator enter your own racer for a time trial. Start with just a ball. When the students object, point at the challenge on the whiteboard indicating that a "racer" doesn't need to be a car.
  - Allow the kids to make a new round of "racers" and have them keep track of their new designs and times.
  - Race your ball again this time giving it a strong rolling push at the starting line. Also not expressly against any rules.
  - The kids will probably get carried away in the next round zooming their racers down the ramp.
  - Add the constraint that the racers may no longer be pushed down the ramp.
  - Bring out the Slingmobiles with their rubber band catapult and see how they do in the time trials.
  - Invite the kids to build their own launching systems.
  - Add a board or otherwise complete roadblock halfway down the middle of the ramp. See how the kids design around surmounting that challenge.
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