

Inflatable Structures

Physical Science and Technology

Project Introduction:

In this project we will explore the basic skills needed to design and build a simple, air-inflated structure. These skills will be used for most of the subsequent projects in this class. Your overall goal will be to build a small (roughly 0.75 cubic meter) building out of soft plastic; the building will be inflated by a fan. Parts of this project are individual - you will need to complete steps 1 and 2 on your own. After you have completed step 2, you may choose a partner who has also completed step 2, pick one structure, and build it together.

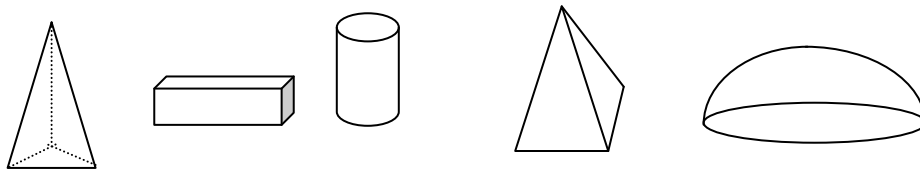
The project will be broken down into the following sections:

1. Platonic solids and thumbnail sketches (5 points)
2. Refined drawing (10 points)
3. Paper model of a structure
4. A scale layout drawing (A+CAD) (10 points)
5. Constructing your structure (25 points)

All necessary materials will be provided for you. Please remember that every day you will need a 3-ring binder with paper, a pencil, and a calculator.

Step 1: Platonic solids and thumbnail sketches (5 points, due 9/25/09)

Platonic solids are the basis for all three-dimensional shapes. Rectangular solids, pyramids, cones, spheres, and cylinders are all examples of platonic solids. Platonic solids can be modified through addition or removal of other shapes; they can also be stretched to form new shapes. Here are some examples of platonic solids – these shapes are (in order) a 3-sided pyramid, a rectangular solid, a cylinder, a 4-sided pyramid, and a dome:



Your inflatable structure needs to be made from at least three different platonic solids (for example, a cone, a rectangular solid, and a pyramid). These solids can be arranged in any way, as long as they are all interconnected.

Start by making five thumbnail sketches of potential structures you could build (take about 20 minutes to do this). A thumbnail sketch is a very quick (1-2 minutes) drawing that has enough detail to be used as the basis for a more refined drawing later on. Thumbnail sketches are generally small (you should be able to fit 2 on one side of a regular sheet of paper and all five on 3 regular sheets of paper) and often include notes or diagrams to help you remember your ideas.

Step 2: Detailed drawing (10 points, due 10/7/09)

Pick your favorite thumbnail sketch and make a larger, more detailed drawing. Your drawing should take up one full sheet of paper so you have lots of room for notes and/or diagrams. Use a ruler and circle templates so your drawing is neat and clean – OR, you can use A+CAD to make your drawing.

Your detailed drawing should show where you want each platonic solid. It should also show attachment points that are in the correct location (in other words, if you want to have a cylinder attached to the middle of a rectangular solid, draw it in the correct location).

For your final structure, you will have one sheet of plastic that is 100 cm x 300 cm to use, so keep this in mind while you are making your drawing.

Step 3: Paper model

Pick a partner! Then, between the two of you, pick your favorite detailed drawing and make a paper three dimensional model. Your quick paper model should be no larger than a shoe box, or roughly 20cm by 20cm by 40cm.

Use any type of paper, a ruler and/or circle templates to make neat and clean structures, and tape to hold the sides of your model together. Make sure there is no overlapping paper. Included air passages between your shapes so air can flow freely throughout the finished structure.

Remember, your quick paper model should have at least three different Platonic solids as part of the structure.

Once you have completed your paper model, you will use it to help you create your layout drawing.

Step 4: Scale layout drawing (10 points, due 10/13/09 at 9:30 am)

Your scale layout drawing will show exactly how you plan to cut and fold the shapes from your sheet of plastic. It is called a scale drawing because it will have the correct proportions, but everything will be.

Start by unfolding your paper model, you have something to look at when you make your final layout drawing. Use A+CAD to create your layout. Since your full sheet of plastic will be 100 cm by 300 cm, you will need to start by drawing a box in A+CAD that is 300 cm wide by 100 cm tall. All of the shapes you plan to cut out for your inflatable structure need to be able to fit into this box!

To the best of your ability, make sure that the shapes you make in A+CAD are the same size relative to each other as the unfolded shapes from your paper model. This will ensure that everything fits together when you make your final structure from plastic. After you have made your shapes in A+CAD, add dimensions to each of the

lines in your drawing so that you know how long to make each part of each shape when you are working with your plastic. Make sure to print out your drawing on 11" x 17" paper, as this will allow you to see the fine details of your drawing, including the dimensions of each line.

Step 5: Make your structure (25 points, due 10/23/09)

Now that you have a scale layout drawing, you're ready to transfer those measurements to the actual sheet of plastic you'll use to construct your structure. Keep in mind that all your drawings will need to fit on the plastic, so you should put them in the same spot on the plastic as they are on your layout drawing.

Once you have carefully measured the lines on the plastic, you can cut out your shapes and tape them together to form the final structure. To add the fan, cut a hole along the side of your structure and tape the fan in securely (you want your structure to be as air-tight as possible).