**Keep a Cube** Activity

A picture containing drawing, food

Description automatically generated

*Distance Learning Implementation Suggestions*

**Educator Notes:**

**Challenge**

Design a container that keeps an ice cube from melting for as long as possible.

**Delivery Format Options**

This open-ended design challenge requires few materials and lends itself nicely to student-directed learning with inputs from educators or parents. A few suggested instruction delivery options:

* Instructions via Google Classroom or Email
* A series of text messages
* Letter sent to their home
* A streaming video or audio session

Depending on the delivery format you are using you can **lead this as a** **discussion** (video or audio-only call) or **provide the information** below directly (Email, text, letter home, or google drive).

**Collecting Materials**

* You’ll need to decide **how much time** you think your students need to collect materials. Some might need a day, others just a few minutes.
* You can also provide a **picture of the materials** you’ve collected, so kids can visualize what you are asking them to collect.

**Student Instructions:**

These instructions are also presented in a video by Future City teacher Victoria Strickland. [Watch it here.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98YB5F0lAeU&feature=youtu.be)

**Challenge**

Design a container that keeps an ice cube from melting for as long as possible.

1. **Identify the Problem**

* The most critical step of any engineering challenge is to **understand the** **problem** you are trying to solve.
* The problem you are trying to solve is **heat transfer.** This is when the heat in the air of the room is transferred to the ice cube, causing it to melt.
* **Insulation** is any material that reduces heat transfer. Using insulation in the walls of a container allow us to keep hot things hot and cold things cold.

1. **Collect Materials**

* Start collecting materials for your container. You will need two ice cubes later, after you are done building.
* Suggested container materials: a cardboard box or shoebox, masking tape, paper, aluminum foil, rubber bands.
* Don’t have all of these items? Look around and see if there are other materials you can use that would make good insulators.
  + Don’t have a cardboard box? Can you make one out of an old pizza or cereal box or use a plastic take out container?
  + Don’t have aluminum foil? What about using old t-shirts or rags instead?

1. **Brainstorm Designs**

* Review the challenge and the problem you are trying to solve.
* Look at your materials. Do you think the materials you collected are good insulators? Why or why not?
* Record the materials you are using and whether you think they will make good insulators.

1. **Build It**

* Start building! If possible, take pictures of the materials as you build. Maybe one at the beginning, one during the process, and one at the end.
* When you are finished building, **make a prediction**. How much will the ice cube will melt in your container?
* Record your prediction.

1. **Test It**

* To test your design, you will need two ice cubes – one for your container and one as the **control.**
* When you are ready, place one ice cube in your container. And place the second ice cube in a bowl outside of your container.
* If possible, take a picture of the two ice cubes at the beginning to remind yourself of what they look like.
* Set a timer for 90 minutes (or use a clock and record the start time).

1. **Share Results**

* After 90 minutes, look at both ice cubes and report the results.
* What do the two ice cubes look like after 90 minutes? If possible, take a picture.
* Did the cube in the container melt as much as you predicted?
* Did the cube in the container melt as much as the control?
* Examine your container. Are there any places where air or heat is getting into their container?
* Are there any changes you want to make to your container?
* Other materials you want to try?

Now it’s time to **redesign your container and try again!**