

Pioneer Toys: Jacob's Ladder

Jacob's Ladder has been a popular folk-toy for several centuries. In Canada, it was especially so in the late 1800's. The toy developed from a story in the Old Testament of the *Bible*, where the prophet Joseph dreamt that he saw angels ascending and descending a ladder that stretched from the earth all the way to heaven. Jacob's Ladder, the toy, is very simple to construct. A series of small, thin, wooden blocks are attached to each other by cloth tape or ribbon. The way the ribbon attaches to the blocks creates an illusion that the blocks tumble or cascade over each other when played with.

MATERIALS:

- 9 pieces of wood 3 1/2" X 1 3/4" X 3/8" plywood
- 10 ft. length of medium-weight binding tape, or thin ribbon
- 1/2" long-headed brads (small nails with larger heads)
- Scissors
- Sandpaper: #180 (fine) and #80 (coarse)

1. Cut the board into six 2½ inch blocks. Use the sandpaper to smooth the edges. Then paint the blocks on all sides and let them dry. (Painting is optional.)

2. Tack the red ribbon to the first block. Center the end of the ribbon on the left edge (see Figure A). Then pull the ribbon toward the right side so that it lies across the top of the block.

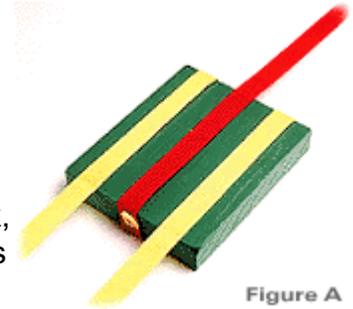


Figure A

Cut the yellow ribbon into two pieces of equal length. Then tack the yellow ribbons to the opposite edge of the same block, spacing them 1/4 inch from the corners. Lay the yellow ribbons across the block, in the opposite direction from the red ribbon.

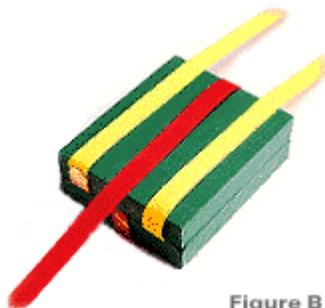


Figure B

3. Place a second block on top of the first one. Pull the yellow ribbons up over the top block and tack them to its left edge, as shown in Figure B. Tack the red ribbon to the right edge, then lay it across the top of the block.

4. One at a time, stack on the remaining blocks and attach them using the same method. When the last block has been attached, trim off the excess ribbon.

To set your Jacob's Ladder in motion, pick up the top two blocks and hold them together along the long edges, using your index finger and thumb. The bottom four blocks should hang freely. Then let go of the block that is second from the top. As it falls, it will appear to tumble down the chain of blocks.