



Blocks Rock! A 4-H Art and Architecture Event

Imagine *The Leaning Tower of Pisa* made entirely from toy building blocks. How about your county courthouse...a wedding cake...or your family dog?

Lego's® and other building blocks are a great way to learn about construction, engineering and architecture – and a great way to express your artistic interests.

Blocks Rock! lets you:

- Show off your creativity.
- Share your design abilities.
- Use your skill as an architect, artist and craftsman.
- Plan, organize and carry through on a challenging project.

What You Will Learn

- **Blocks Rock!** will help you learn the basics of good design.
- **Blocks Rock!** will help you learn to recognize and practice good art and construction techniques.
- **Blocks Rock!** will help you learn to explore your own personal design preferences, making decisions and choices.
- **Blocks Rock!** will help you learn and practice skills that will be useful in an array of careers.

Who Can Participate

Any Alabama young person may participate in any 4-H competitive event. However, you must be a member of an Alabama 4-H Club. It's easy and quick to join – just call or e-mail your county Alabama Cooperative Extension System Office for information (for contact information, go to www.aces.edu/counties).

If you and your friends are interested, you might start a 4-H Project Club. It could focus on Art and Architecture. Or it might be all about Construction, Making and Selling Crafts, Folk Art, or Computer-Aided Design. For information, see **Starting a 4-H Club** (www.AL4H.org).

Blocks Rock! is a Junior and Senior 4-H Event. Your local Extension Office has information on local and regional 4-H arts events and other 4-H activities.

Levels of Competition

For details on eligibility, see the General Event Policy.

- **Juniors:** 9 – 13 Years Old. Must be 9, 10, 11, 12, or 13 years old on January 1 of the current calendar year. (Compete only at local and regional level).
- **Senior – Level I:** 14 – 15 Years Old. Must be 14 or 15 years old on January 1 of the current calendar year.
- **Senior – Level II:** 16 – 19 Years Old. Must be 16, 17, 18 or 19 years old on January 1 of the current calendar year.

A Celebration of Creativity!

The most creative, best-built Blocks Rock! art will be displayed in locations across the state. Do a great job, and you'll become famous!

The Rules!

- Your entire **Blocks Rock!** art must be constructed from Lego's® or other toy building blocks.
- It can't be any wider than 12 inches x 15 inches.
- It can't be any taller than 16 inches.
- Your art will be placed on a table and viewed from all sides.
- It must be transported on a firm, flat surface like foam board or plywood. Consider gluing or temporary attachment of tape to keep the structure secure.
- Your name and county need to be on a small piece of tape attached to the **Blocks Rock!** art.
- You must do all the construction yourself.

Parents' and Volunteers' Guide

Like all 4-H projects, this activity is just for young people. It is expected that the young person create an original presentation. The role of adult helper is to support and encourage youth in their efforts, to ask and answer questions about the project, and to help youth learn specific techniques that they might use in their project.



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Rockin' and Blockin'

Thinking About Design

What does **design** mean? **Design** is how a piece of art or a product (anything from a toothpick to a skyscraper) is arranged and put together. Think about the hottest sports car or the coolest piece of technology. Good **design** makes it attractive to look at and easy to use. **Design** combines artistic awareness and knowledge of the materials (such as metal or plastic) used in putting the object together.

Where Do I Start?

There are many different ways to decide what you want to build. If you have a clear idea in mind, you might just start building. If you like to use a computer, you might start playing with a design program like Sims or the free 3D graphics software, **DesignWorkshop Lite** (www.artifice.com/dw_lite.html).

Or you might try the approach we have written out here.

Let your imagination flow. Look at the world-class masterpieces that other artists have created. Alabama's own Eric Harshbarger (www.ericharshbarger.org/lego/portfolio.html) is a master of the craft.

Look at examples of great architecture (www.greatbuildings.com). Visit some museums like the Museum of Modern Art (www.moma.org) or the Spanish Guggenheim (www.guggenheim-bilbao.es/ingles/home.htm). Go to your school or community library and start thumbing through art and architecture books.

Begin roughly sketching out your design ideas. Start thinking about how many blocks you need, what sizes are required, what colors you will use. What will you use as your base?

The Day of the Big Event

Each county or region will schedule its own **Blocks Rock!** competition. It may be part of a County Round-Up or Regional Congress. Some places may have the event as part of a 4-H arts festival or a community fair. Some may have workshops that help young people build their artistic skills and meet other artists and crafters.

On the day of the event, allow yourself **plenty** of time to set up. Be prepared to put loose blocks back together if they get damaged in transportation.

And be ready to **informally** answer some questions from the judges. These questions might be things like:

- "How did you create your design?"
- "Why did you use the colors you selected?"
- "What would you do differently?"
- "Could you use your design to make a real building or real sculpture?"

Advancing Through Competition

Congratulations! If you make it to Regional or State Congress, you are among the best in Alabama! The judges recognize that you have come up with a really good design and made great choices. Your hard work and your skill created something wonderful.

At the regional level, you will not compete against other 4-H'ers. You will compete against a standard of excellence. *Blue*, *red*, or *white* will be given. Ribbons will be given on the following basis:

Blue: For excellent constructions. They demonstrate a great degree of originality and construction technique.

Red: For good quality constructions. They are well done, but are not outstanding.

White: Acceptable constructions.

[Score equivalents for those using Score Sheets in local or regional events:

Blue: 90 – 100

Red: 80 – 89

White: 79 and below]

Best of Show: The judges will determine one Sr. Level 1 and one Sr. Level II construction to advance from the regional level to state competition.

State Competition

At State Competition, the judges will select one construction from the regional winners. This will be designated **Alabama State 4-H Best in Show**.

Team Block-Hedz

Team Block-Hedz uses the same rules and guidelines as individual competition. Team constructions are judged against individual constructions and are part of the same event.

However, the design and construction are undertaken by teams of 2 – 4 young people within the same 4-H age level (for example, Senior Level II).

It can be fun and educational to work with others on a challenging project. Each team member may have special skills or better ideas.

Besides the other great stuff you learn through **Team Block-Hedz**, **Team Block-Hedz** helps teach teamwork, communications, leadership, and cooperation.

Each team member should be fully involved in the process, from start to finish, and should be fully prepared to answer any questions about how the design was developed and the piece constructed.

Career Connections

Skills that are developed through this project have direct connections to a number of exciting and rewarding careers. These include: Architecture, Construction, Fine Art, Art Therapy, Advertising, Fashion Design, Theatre Design, Craft, Graphic Design, Illustration, Teaching, Industrial Design, Interior Design, and Museum Display.

Further career-related skills are developed in the Above and Beyond section and through **Team Block-Hedz**. These include planning, leadership, and organization.

Judging Guidelines

The selection of the judges is important to the success of the event. The ideal judge knows about art and design and can easily chat with young people. The selection of an architect, art teacher, and working artist or crafter provides a perfect judging panel.

On the day of the event, each individual or team enters the judging area in a designated order. The facilitator will introduce the participant to the judges. The judges will talk informally with the participants about the design and construction techniques. Judges are encouraged to positively offer their comments on the originality of the

design, what was most effective in the construction, and suggestions for improvement.

Above and Beyond

All 4-H projects can be taken “above and beyond” just being a short-term activity. Awards and recognition throughout Alabama 4-H are not based on how well you do in competitive events; they are based on your all-round community service, leadership, and project work.

Here are some ideas for taking your interest in Art and Architecture to a level where you can both grow as a person and have an impact on the lives of others:

- Hold a different kind of competition: divide your club, your youth group, or your friends into teams and provide each team with a bucket of blocks. Give them a set amount of time. See whose design is best.
- Organize a community show of **4-H Blocks Rock!** and other art projects.
- Explore making sculpture or small buildings with other media such as wire, clay or folded note cards.
- Create a web site with photos of the **Blocks Rock!** art.
- Talk with a builder or architect about the training that is required to build real buildings.
- Teach younger kids to make **Blocks Rock!** art.
- Make a video about your project or use it in an animated story.
- Take photographs of your project.
- Create a 3-D model of your **Blocks Rock!** art using CAD (Computer Aided Design) software.
- Invite an architect or designer to provide a workshop.

Blocks Rock! Score Sheet

Participant Name: _____ Date: _____ County: _____

Level: ___ *Junior* (Ages 9-13) ___ *Senior I* (Ages 14-15) ___ *Senior II* (Ages 16-19)

This score sheet is not designed to determine placement. It is designed to give feedback to the participants. Local judges will need to determine 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place. Regional judges will award Blue, Red, and White Ribbons and determine **Best in Show** to go to State Competition and an alternate. State judges will determine Best in Show.

CATEGORY	Excellent	Above Average	Average	Needs Improvement
Quality of Construction [Circle Appropriate X]	The project shows considerable attention to construction. It is solidly crafted and well put together. X	The project shows attention to construction. It is well put together. X	The project shows some attention to construction. It is put together adequately. X	The project is not put together neatly. Items appear to be carelessly or hurriedly attached. X
Design [Circle Appropriate X]	Project is appropriate size and interesting shape and is arranged well. Project is attractive and well proportioned. X	Project is appropriate size and interesting shape and is arranged well. Project is attractive but does not appear proportioned. X	Project is appropriate size but is not very attractive. It appears there was not a lot of planning in the item placement. X	Project is not appropriate size. It appears that little thought and attention was given to designing the project. X
Creativity [Circle Appropriate X]	Blocks used in the project reflect an exceptional degree of creativity in their arrangement and display. X	Some materials reflect student creativity in their arrangement and display. X	Ideas were typical rather than creative. X	The student did not demonstrate originality or creativity in the overall project. X
Judges' Comments				

Few art events use a "score sheet" to determine what makes a good work of art. It is suggested that the county or regional event facilitator talk with the judges to determine their preferences in judging.

Please remember that the sole purpose of this event is to provide young people with an opportunity for self-expression and to learn more about design. Competition and judging should emphasize creativity and the development of knowledge and skill.