

## Make a Maze with Drinking Straws!

On those lazy summer afternoons, there's nothing like a fun puzzle or maze to keep your third grader fascinated. You can find books of mazes in toy shops, but with a piece of corrugated cardboard, a marble, and some bendable drinking straws, you and your child can make a three dimensional toy that you can enjoy again and again. And while you're busy crafting, remember this: for third and fourth graders, mazes are an excellent math tool. Teachers encourage kids to explore them as a way to strengthen logical reasoning and spatial thinking, both of which are crucial to success in geometry. Kids will benefit from this activity if you make the maze, but the learning will be even deeper if your child designs it herself. With these simple materials, that should be a snap!



### What You Need:

- Flat piece of corrugated cardboard, 12"x18" or so
- Box of bendable drinking straws
- Exacto knife
- Plastic mesh bag, such as for onions or oranges
- Hot glue gun
- Ruler and pen
- Bright colored marker
- Marble

### What You Do:

1. Lay the corrugated cardboard on a flat surface, and start by marking a 1" square in the middle. Use the Exacto knife to cut it out completely. This will be "home base" for your maze.
2. Turn the cardboard over. Cut out a 3"x 3" section of plastic netting, stretch it across the hole, and tape it down.
3. Now use your ruler and pen to mark out a maze with 1" channels, all the way out to the far edge of your cardboard. Be sure to create plenty of false turns and twists! When you reach the far corner of your maze, make a star with your marker—that will be the starting point for your marble.
4. Lay the drinking straws along the maze lines, and glue them down with your hot glue gun or with strong craft glue.
5. When the glue has dried, your child will have a fabulous maze toy to mess around with by the hour—and you can feel satisfaction, too, in providing an activity that is so much fun while being great for learning, too.