

Modern Chair Design



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Experience modern furniture design through the use of modern materials.

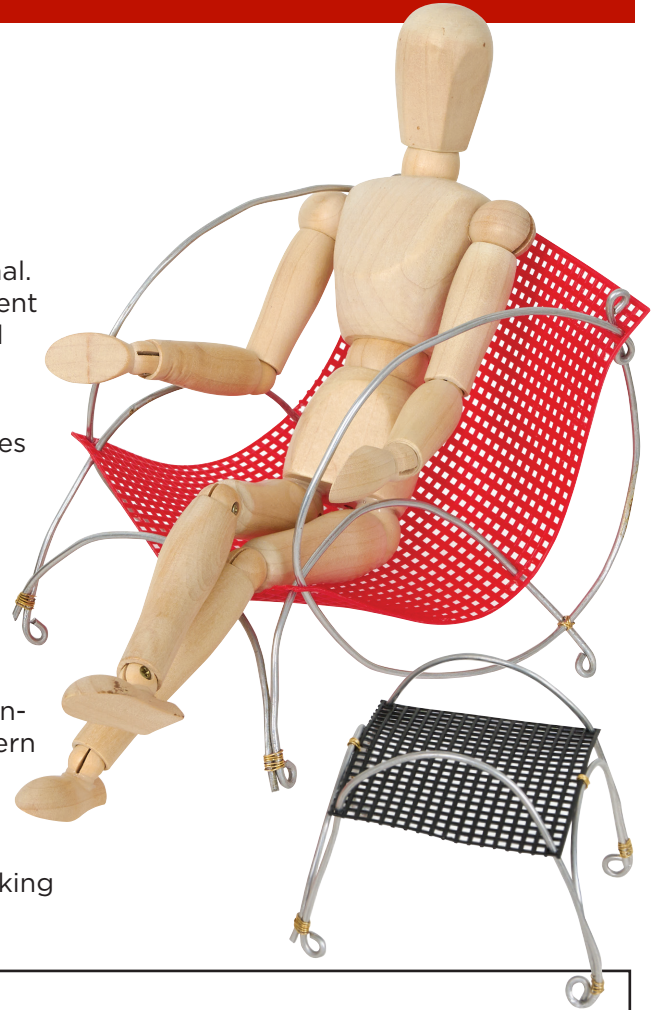
(art + social studies; art + math)

To say that something has a "modern" design brings to mind a certain look that might be described as unconventional, sleek, or minimal. Modernism is more than just the way something looks. It's a movement that shaped design, art, and architecture during the last century and continues its influence today.

Fueled by technology, economics, and mass-production, early 20th-century designers conceived new ideas using new materials. Factories that had increased production of glass, plastics, steel and aluminum for wartime efforts shifted manufacturing to consumer products. Buildings, cars, electronics, and furniture were all designed to bring modern design to the middle class through affordable and widely available channels.

Charles and Ray Eames, a husband-and-wife team, designed some of the most iconic pieces of modernist furniture. They embraced the motto "The best for the most for the least". Their simple and functional forms were constructed from plywood, fiberglass, and other modern materials that could be quickly, easily, and affordably produced. Yet, they were so attractively designed and of such high quality that Eames furniture pieces remain in high demand 70+ years later.

A designer's role, the Eames' believed, was to be like a good host taking care of his guests. (continued on next page)



Materials (required)

Construction Materials, options including:

Blick Armature Wire, 14 gauge, 350 ft spool (33400-1435)

P.L. Butte Reed, assorted sizes and lengths, bundle of round (83312-) or flat (83313-); share one across class

Grafix Assorted Chipboard, pkg of 15 sheets, 8.5" x 11" (13141-1011); share two across class

Pacon Corrugated Sheets, pkg of 12 assorted, 12" x 16" (11214-1009); share two across class

Colorful Plastic Canvas, 10.5" x 13.5", assorted colors (63103-); share 4-5 across class

Pacon U-Create Plastic Posterboard, assorted colors, 22" x 28" (13155-); share two across class

Creativity Street WonderFoam Sheets, pkg of 10 sheets, 12" x 18" (60947-1000); share one across class

Aleene's Turbo Tacky Glue (23884-1102); share 6-8 across class

Fiskars Titanium Soft Grip Scissors, 5" (57612-1005); share 6-8 across class

Optional Materials

Blick Matte Acrylic Paints, 2 oz, assorted colors (00727-)

Hemptique Hemp Cord Spools, assorted colors and sizes (63830-)

Blick Studio Brush Markers, assorted colors (24532-)

Fiskars Hand Punch, 1/16" hole (58923-1001)

Aleene's Felt and Foam Tacky Glue, 4 oz (83805-1004) or **Aleene's Permanent Fabric Glue**, 4 oz (83805-1005)



Ready to order materials?

Go to www.DickBlick.com/lesson-plans/modern-chair-design to access a product bundle for your convenience.



To experience the creativity and problem-solving challenges that a modern designer faced, students can plan and build a chair for a toy "customer". Choices for construction materials are endless, but looking to readily-available materials that aren't typically used for furniture will present opportunities for engineering lessons and out-of-the-box thinking.

Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

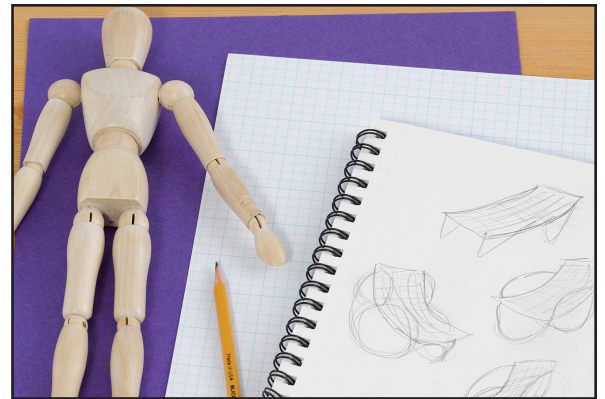
Preparation

1. View and discuss furniture examples from modern and post-modern designers. Observe form and balance, while speculating on materials and design challenges. Some recommendations:

- Marcel Breuer - Wassily Chair, 1925
- Eileen Gray - Side Table, 1927
- Ludwig Mies van der Rohe - Barcelona Chair, 1929
- Charles and Ray Eames - Molded Plywood Chair, 1946
- Isamu Noguchi - Coffee Table, 1948
- Eero Saarinen - Tulip Chair, 1957
- Sori Yanagi - Ball Chair, 1965
- Jomo Tariku - Nyala Chair and Quanta Totem Chair, 2022

Process

1. Select a toy "customer" to design a chair for. Toys can be provided by students or collected from thrift shops or other inexpensive sources. Use small stuffed or "bean bag" animals, dolls, action figures, or molded plastic animals.
2. Collect materials for construction. Keep in mind the progressive selection that early modern designers worked with: plastics, vinyl, metals, fiberglass, plywood - things that no one had designed furniture with before. Look for unusual and non-traditional items and consider what materials could be repurposed as furniture.
3. Determine the needs of the toy "customer" and plan the design based on their unique needs. For instance, a toy that can't be positioned in a sitting position might need a lounge chair.
4. If desired, plan the design first with preliminary sketches. In the early years as Modern Design expanded, decoration and ornamentation were considered unnecessary and purposefully avoided. How the piece functioned and served its purpose was more important than how it looked. As design progressed, color, shape and pattern became integrated with minimal structure. Young designers should be aware of this ideal, but do not need to follow it as a strict rule. Cushions and decorative elements, - if they work within the design - are acceptable if the piece is primarily functional.

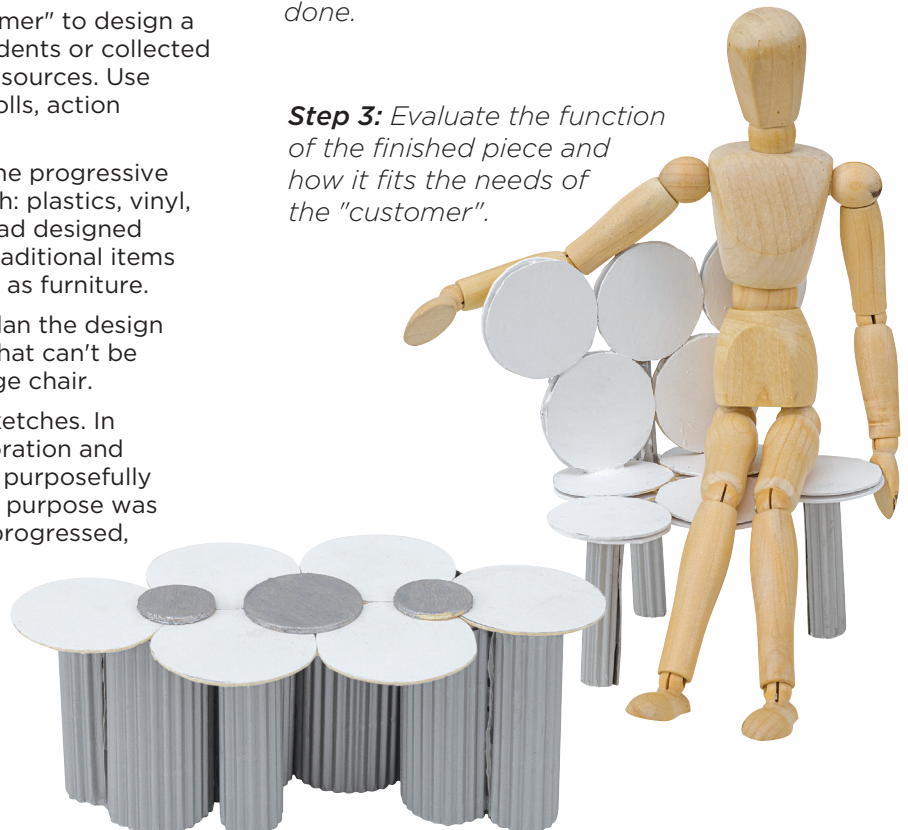


Step 1: Select a toy to be the "customer." Consider their needs and design a piece of furniture for them.



Step 2: Engineer the design using a variety of non-traditional materials and creative construction techniques, as early modern designers would have done.

Step 3: Evaluate the function of the finished piece and how it fits the needs of the "customer".



5. Assemble with a variety of materials. Wire, construction paper and other “hard” materials may provide strength and stability, while foam, fabric and other “soft” materials may be necessary for the “customer’s” comfort.

Use glue, tape, staples, fasteners, and other materials to join components and provide strength and stability. Working with a variety of materials requires creative problem solving and engineering. For instance, most classroom glues don’t bond with materials like plastic. Don’t be frustrated - think of other ways to construct, beyond gluing. Scan the code at right or visit “[Attached to Bontecou](#)”, a lesson plan that demonstrates creative attachment techniques such as tabs, flanges, notches, braces, etc.

6. Once a seating design is complete, evaluate the functionality. Would the customer be pleased? If adjustments were to be made to the design, what would they be? Would it be easy to make more of these pieces? These evaluations - leading to evolutions - were an important part of the Modern Design movement.

Option

- Imagine a setting for the piece - a home or habitat belonging to the customer. Draw the room or location as a backdrop, or, use magazine images to create an environment.

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Responding

Anchor Standard 9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work

Connecting

Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.



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