

Doll's house



Turn an old bookcase into a miniature world for dolls.

Add a roof and doors to a bookcase and you've created a delightful doll's house. Decorate with left over wallpaper, scraps of fabric and furniture made of matchboxes, cotton reels and a little imagination!

You'll find doll's house furniture at toy and hobby shops - look under 'Dolls' in the Yellow Pages for local suppliers. The scale of the furniture is usually 12:1, but for a young child you may prefer something larger.

The charm of a doll's house lies in its uniqueness; so let your architectural skills run free.



You'll need

Bookcase: around 60 x 80 x 30cm

MDF: 180 x 90cm piece of 12mm, small piece of 16mm, 60 x 90cm piece of 3mm

Tools: jigsaw, screwdriver, hammer, drill, pair of compasses

Materials: pencil, putty knife, PVA, sandpaper, 10mm drill bit, 5-minute Araldite, paintbrushes

Fixings: four brass flush hinges, 45mm 8-gauge screws, 20mm flathead nails

Finishing: paints, impasto medium, champagne cork, piece of lace, plastic kitchen wrap, plaster or cornice cement, sheet of clear acetate, sheet of blue cardboard, sheet of thick cardboard, craft scalpel, small block of florists' foam, sheet of balsa wood, dried or artificial flowers, wallpaper or thick wrapping paper, fabric or felt pieces for floor covering, tiny cup hooks, satay sticks, two half terracotta pots from craft shops

Here's how

Step 1 Remove any extensions on the bookcase with a jigsaw and cut out three 110 x 160mm windows on each side.

Roof

Step 2 Cut two pieces off 2mm MDF to the same depth as the bookcase, one piece 12mm longer than

the other - we cut one piece 50cm, the other 51.2cm. This will allow an 8cm overhang to form the eaves. Use a compass or draw around a jar lid to create the scalloped eaves and cut out with the jigsaw. Butt-join the two pieces of MDF at a 90-degree angle, glue and screw together, then glue and screw the roof to the bookcase into the bookcase sides.

Step 3 To make the back section of the roof, lay the house on its back on a sheet of 3mm MDF and draw around the roof, just to the top of the bookcase, not to the bottom of the eaves. Cut out the shape with a jigsaw and nail in position with 20mm flathead nails.

Doors

Step 4 Lay house face down on a sheet of 12mm MDF and draw around it (omitting the eaves). Take 10mm off the bottom of the outline to allow for clearance. Cut out the shape with a jigsaw, draw a line from apex to centre of base and cut the shape in half to make two doors. Sand the edges.

Step 5 Hang the doors to check that they are correctly aligned, then remove them for ease of working. Draw three windows on each door - ours are 110 x 95mm and cut out with a jigsaw.

Interior walls

Step 6 Measure from floor to ceiling and front to back on each level. Use a jigsaw to cut from the 12mm MDF. Draw and cut out door openings in the interior walls - ours are 75 x 165 mm. Glue walls in position if they are a snug fit, or glue and nail, nailing down into them from the floor above and up from the floor below.

Balcony floors

Step 7 Cut the balcony floors for the sides of house from 16 mm MDF and, with the house on its side and propped up on blocks to protect the eaves, glue in place with 5-minute Araldite. Paint the exterior and the doors with background colour.

Dormer windows

Step 8 To make dormer windows, cut a 130 x 185mm rectangle from 3mm MDF. Cut it in half diagonally and butt-join the two short sides of the triangles together. Cut another right angle triangle to fit inside the 90-degree opening and glue in place about 10mm in from what will be the right-angle corner. To make hoods for the front windows, cut a 65mm-wide strip of 3mm MDF about 40mm longer than the width of window. Cut two right angle triangles to fit under the hood at either end. Scallop the bottom of the hood in the same way as the eaves, glue triangle shapes in place and set hoods aside to allow glue to set.

Step 9 Mark positions for dormer windows on the roof with a pencil. Mix one part paint with four parts impasto medium to make a thick paste. Spread mixture over roof with a putty knife, except where the dormer windows will be attached (thickness of 2-3 mm). To make a shingled roof, press the bottom of a champagne cork into the mixture, sweep downwards slightly then roll bottom edge of cork up, creating a shingle-like texture. Repeat on dormers and hoods. Let dry 24 hours.

Balcony surrounds

Step 10 Cut a 40mm-wide piece of lace to fit around balcony floor. Cut a 40mm-thick block of timber the same size as the balcony floor to use as a mould, and cover with plastic wrap. Soak lace in a creamy mixture of plaster or cornice cement for two minutes and work mixture into lace with fingers. Lay soaked lace over mould and allow to dry for 24 hours, trim to size and repeat for other three balconies.

Exterior windows

Step 11 Cut pieces of clear acetate 10mm larger than openings. Draw around the acetate onto thick cardboard and pencil in window frames and panes. Cut out the frames and openings. Paint frames, let dry and glue acetate to back. To make interior windows, cut window shapes from blue card, make frames as before, and glue together.

Step 12 Cut blocks of florists' foam to make window boxes, slightly longer than the window frames. Glue a piece of 2mm balsa wood to three sides of foam with Araldite, sand corners lightly and paint window boxes.

Assemble and decorate

Step 13 Glue all exterior window frames to house. Glue stiffened lace to side balconies, hoods over front windows, dormers to roof and window boxes beneath front windows. Re-hang doors.

Step 14 Trace stencil pattern onto acetate or card, cut out and use to paint climbing roses up front of house, placing it at a different angle each time. Paint naive flowers in a simple swirl stroke. Paint on a

front door. Wallpaper inside the house, cut fabric or felt to fit floors and attach with PVA. A sheet of veneer simulates polished timber and make tiles with a chequerboard pattern on a sheet of card.

Step 15 Glue interior windows in place. To make curtain rods, cut a 10mm-wide strip of 6mm MDF slightly longer than the windows. Screw a tiny cup hook in at each end and attach just above the interior windows with Araldite. Make curtains from fabric scraps and use satay sticks for curtain rods. Break dried flowers off near the heads and push into florist's foam in the window boxes. Glue a half terracotta pot each side of the front door, press a small block of florists' foam into each and add more dried flowers.