

Cooking Ideas

Food often had to be eaten while travelling along. Cooking aboard a narrowboat was a bit like cooking at camp. Meals had to be nutritious but made with little equipment.



Try making these scrumptious recipes - inspired by the boaters and their lives.

Chocolate Cornflake Cakes

Cocoa beans were imported into England by ship from the Caribbean and Africa to be made into chocolate crumb. The chocolate crumb was then transported by canal boats to Cadbury's factory in Bourneville to be made into chocolate.



You will need

- 75g butter
- 200g dark chocolate, broken into small chunks
- 4 tbsp golden syrup
- 200g cornflakes
- Small saucepan and baking tray

What to do

- Melt the butter, chocolate and golden syrup in a small saucepan over a low heat
- Remove and cool for 5 minutes
- Put 24 cupcake cases into muffin tins, or on a baking tray
- Stir the cornflakes into the mixture and spoon into the cupcake cases, allow to set and then serve

Oatcakes

These could be made on top of the tiny stove in the cabin. They were cheap to make and filling too.



You will need

- 1 cup of medium oatmeal
- A large pinch of salt
- 1 tablespoon of melted dripping or lard
- 1 cup of boiling water
- A bowl and a thick frying pan or griddle

What to do

- Put the oatmeal in the bowl and add the salt and dipping or lard
- Now add the boiling water, mix everything together and knead into a ball
- Break off pieces the size of an egg
- Flatten with the palm of your hand to about 5mm thick
- Heat the frying pan or griddle and bake slowly on both sides over a low flame until crisp



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Cooking Ideas

Boaters would use natural resources for food. They would fish for eels from the stern and they collected fruit and vegetables from the hedgerows and fields.



Try making these scrumptious recipes - inspired by the boaters and their lives.

Blackberry Fool

In autumn, wild blackberries are plentiful along towpaths. You can pick them to make this delicious blackberry fool.



You will need

- 400g blackberries
- 3 tbsp icing sugar
- ½ tsp lemon juice
- 250ml whipping cream
- 250ml greek yoghurt

What to do

- Put the blackberries, icing sugar, lemon juice and one tbsp of water into a pan over a low heat
- Slowly heat the mixture, stirring a few times, until it begins to simmer and the blackberries start to look soft and juicy
- Remove from the heat and leave to cool
- Whisk the cream in a separate bowl until it forms 'soft peaks', then gently fold in the yoghurt and half of the cooled puree
- Gently ripple through the rest of the puree and spoon into dishes. Top with blackberries and serve
- If you want a really smooth Blackberry Fool, pass the berry mix through a sieve. Push down on the fruit to help as much as possible go through. Squeeze out every last drop of juice

Top TIP



Take care when cooking and always ask an adult for help.

Next Step → → → →

You can freeze Blackberry Fool for up to three months! Use an old ice cream container and design a new label with a blackberry theme.



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Roses & Castles

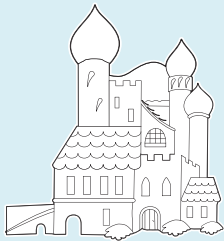
Narrowboats and household items such as stools and watering cans were often decorated with bright, colourful patterns of roses and fairytale castles. For families living on the boats it helped the boat feel more like home. There wasn't much room for decorative items so they often painted images straight onto the walls.



Design a new Roses & Castles pattern for a narrowboat

You will need

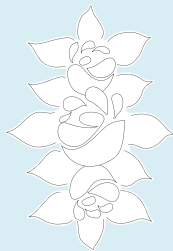
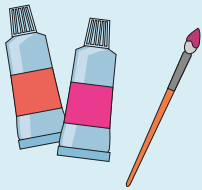
Paper plate, photo frame, wooden spoon or box



Castles template

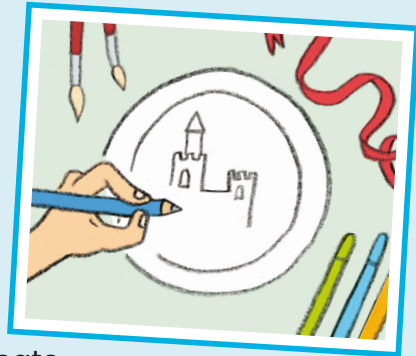
Roses template

Paint and paint brushes



What to do

Using pencils, draw a design onto your item using the templates to help
Paint the designs in



Every boater had their own style. To create your own, think about:

- A bold and simple pattern to make the boat look cheerful
- A pattern that can be painted quickly
- Painting a picture of your home, school or other buildings near you instead of a castle
- Include other flowers or trees in your design



Top TIP



Use soft paint brushes that come to a nice point and create the same sort of effect as traditional Roses & Castles.

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Test out your design by looking at it from several feet away to see if it is visible from a distance just as Roses & Castles would have been on a narrowboat.



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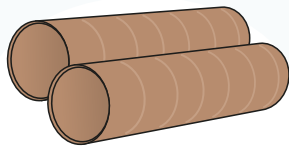


Make Your Own Bug Hotel

It can be hard for wildlife to find safe hideaways in gardens. You can make an outside space more inviting and provide just the nooks and hollows they might be looking for by building a bug hotel – you never know who might come to stay! From hedgehogs to toads, solitary bees to bumblebees, and ladybirds to woodlice. Visitors looking for somewhere dry and sunny will be different to those who like to stay somewhere damp!



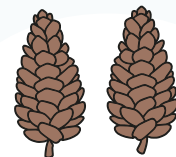
You will need:



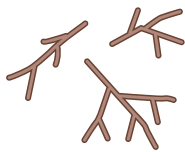
Cardboard tubes



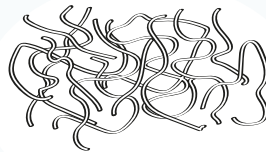
Dried leaves



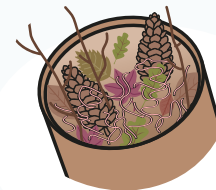
Pine cones



Twigs



Shredded paper



Completed hotel

What to do

Fill the cardboard tubes with a mix of twigs, dried leaves, pine cones and other biodegradable materials you can find

Stack the tubes in a flat shaded area

Make sure the twigs are big enough to stick out of the ends of the tubes



Top TIP



Build your hotel away from growing vegetables – you don't want visitors to help themselves!

A planter or seed tray makes a great roof.
Sow wildflower seeds to attract more guests.

Next Step → → → →

You can build bug hotels of all different sizes using materials such as bricks, bamboo canes and wood or wooden pallets.



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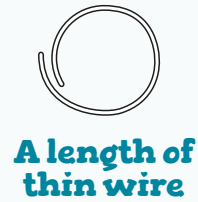
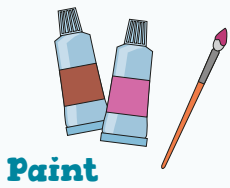


Build a Bird Feeder

Canals are a great place to spot birds. Your garden, balcony or group meeting space are good places for bird-spotting too. Look after the birds near you by making this bird feeder.



You will need

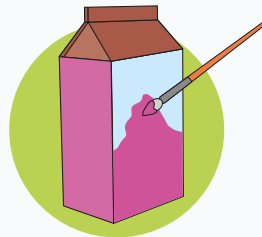


What to do

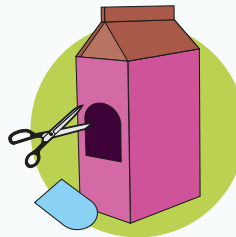
Wash and dry the carton



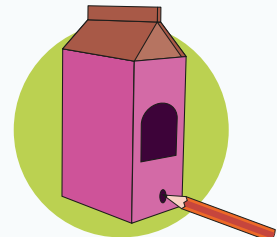
Paint the carton



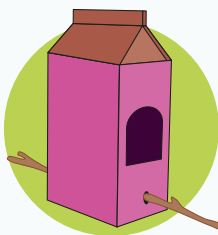
Using scissors, cut windows in the sides



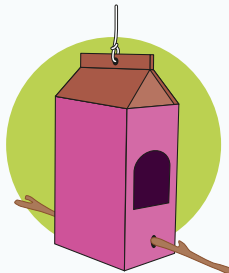
Make holes at the base of the feeder



Push a twig through the holes to make a perch



Push the wire through the top of the feeder and tie a knot



Sprinkle some birdseed in the bottom of the feeder – and keep watch!



Top TIP



Hang the feeder on a high branch outside so that cats can't reach it.



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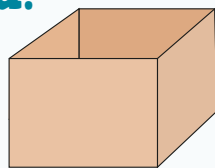
Helping Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs need to eat a lot of beetles, earthworms, caterpillars and other creepy crawlies before they hibernate and like to shelter in log piles, long grass and in different plants. They look for somewhere to hibernate between October and March and make nests under hedgerows, fallen logs and brambles. You can help them by making a hedgehog home.



You will need:

Thick card board box



Newspaper



Scissors



Grass and twigs

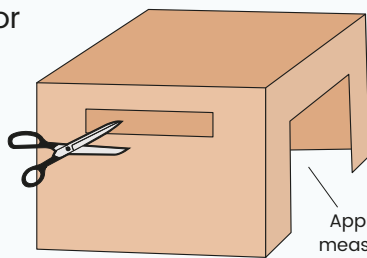


Black bin liner



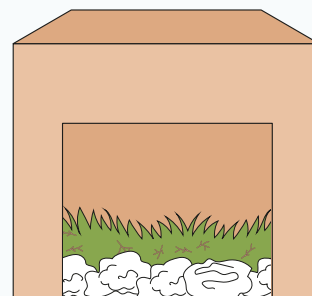
What to do

Cut a little door out on the front of your box and two vents in the sides for your hedgehog



Approximate measurements
15cm x 15cm

Put some torn up newspaper inside your box and some clean, dry grass on top



Find a nice quiet spot in your garden near a bush or hedge. Put a black bin liner over your hedgehog house and cover with twigs, grass and leaves



Top TIP



Leave some seeds or worms out for your hedgehog to nibble but not too close to the house so that other creatures don't bother your hedgehog.

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For a stronger home you could use a plastic storage box or even ask an adult to help you make one out of wood.



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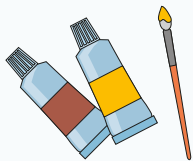


Build a Bird Bath

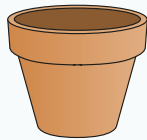
Water helps keep a bird's body cool, both from the inside and from the outside. Having a birdbath in your garden will provide birds with water to bathe in and drink. It will also help them to remove parasites and keep their feathers in good condition.'



You will need



Paint



Plant pot



Saucer

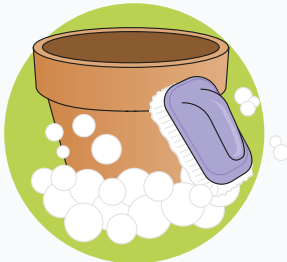


Strong glue

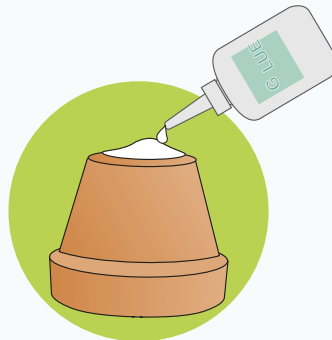


Sealer

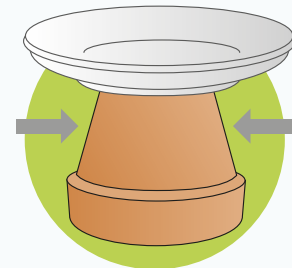
What to do



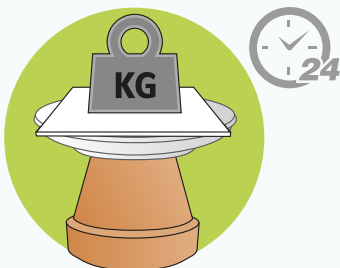
Scrub the base of the pot before applying the glue



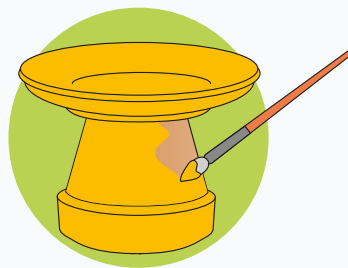
Be generous with the waterproof glue



Make sure the saucer is centred over the pot



Press the saucer down and leave to dry for 24 hours



Paint it and add a coat of sealer to protect it



Top TIP



Add stones or pebbles so birds can perch to drink fresh, clean water. This will also enable thirsty bees to drink from the bath without danger of drowning.



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Build a Bat Box

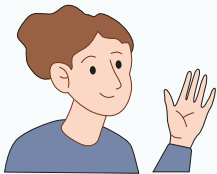
Canal towpaths are great places to spot bats, but did you know...?

- Bats can weigh as little as a 2p piece (Pipistrelle)
- They can live to be 25 years old
- They are not blind
- They are the only mammal that can fly
- A Pipistrelle bat can eat more than 500 insects in an hour!

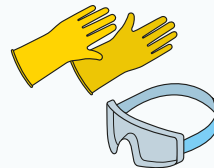


You will need:

An adult to help you



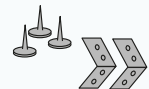
Gloves and eye protection



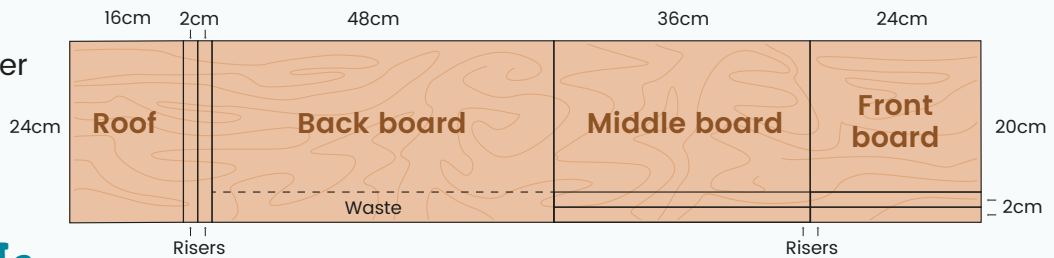
Tape measure and pencil



Nails and Brackets

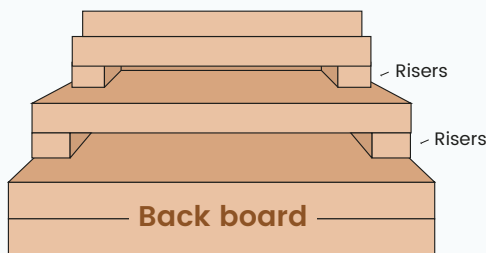


Cut your timber to these dimensions

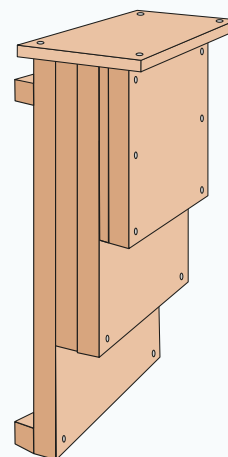


What to do

Nail together the boards using the risers to create gaps in between



View from below



Attach brackets to fix the box to the wall
 Fix the box 4m off the ground in Spring (when the bats finish hibernating)
 Choose a sheltered spot, exposed to sun for part of the day

Top TIP



All UK bats and their roosts are protected by law, which means it is illegal to harm or disturb them. Once up, a bat box cannot be opened legally without a licence. For more information call the Bat Helpline 0345 1300 228.



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Blackberry Mess

Wild blackberries (or brambles) are ripe and ready to pick in the autumn. Canal towpaths and river banks are a great place to look for them.



Try making this Blackberry Mess - a scrummy pudding that doesn't need any cooking.



You will need

- 250g blackberries
- 1 teaspoon caster sugar
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 125g whipping cream
- 125g greek yoghurt
- 2 small meringue nests
- 2 bowls
- A sieve
- A fork

What to do

- Wash the blackberries and take out any leaves and stalks
- Drain the blackberries well and put them in a bowl. Press them lightly with a fork to make the juices run
- Add the lemon juice and sugar
- Whip the cream in a separate bowl until it is thick but still soft. Mix in the yoghurt
- Break up the meringue into rough chunks
- Mix everything together - yum!

Did you Know?



Blackberries were once used to make mauve, dark blue and purple-blue dyes for cloth.

Next Step → → → →

Blackberries can be used to make all sorts of things to eat, from chutneys, to crumbles and other Blackberry Fool. Check the History and Make and Do sections for more ideas!

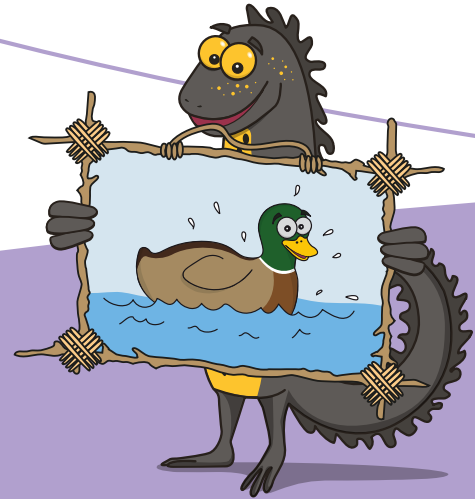


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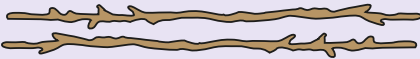
Make a Stick Frame

You will find lots of sticks as you walk on the towpath. Why not collect some the next time you visit and make this easy picture frame.

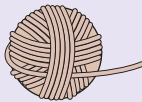


You will need:

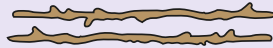
2 sticks* for the sides



String or twine



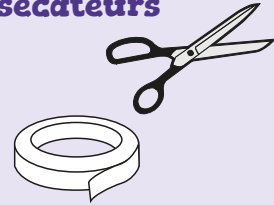
2 shorter sticks* for the top and bottom



Double-sided tape or PVA glue

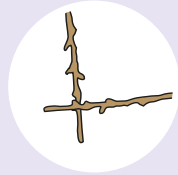


Scissors or secateurs



What to do

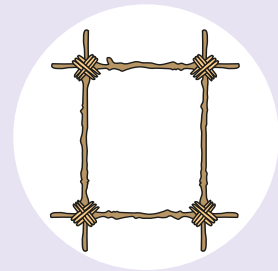
- Place two of the sticks at right angles to each other to form a corner
- Wind the string around the two sticks, moving it backwards and forwards in a figure or 8. Do this at least 4 times
- Tie the string to the short length, at the back, and cut off the spare string



- Repeat for each corner



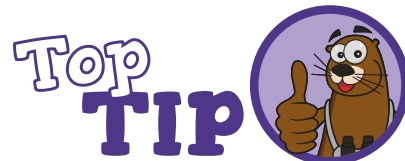
- Tie a loop to the top for hanging
- Glue a picture to the back of the frame



*Please use wind-fallen sticks. Do not break new sticks.

Next Step → → → →

Draw or paint a picture for your frame. Use sticky tape or glue to fix your picture to the frame. Remember to put the tape or glue on the back of your picture!



Use your frame to focus on what you would like to draw. Look through the frame and move around until you see something you like.



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Make a Community Bracelet

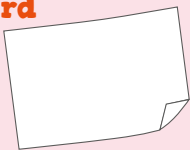
Next time you spot a narrowboat, look out for decorative knot work on the fenders (buffers to stop boats crashing into banks and boats). Try making this bracelet inspired by a boater's knot. Why not agree a colour scheme for you and all your friends to use? Wearing matching bracelets can make you feel part of a community.

Try some knotwork of your own to make this bracelet



You will need

Card



Tape measure



Masking tape



Large spring clasp



Glue



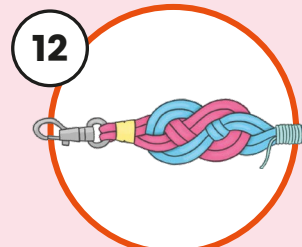
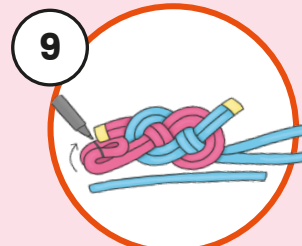
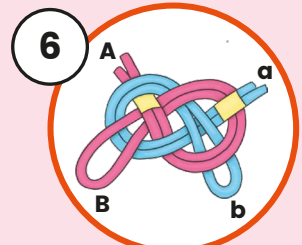
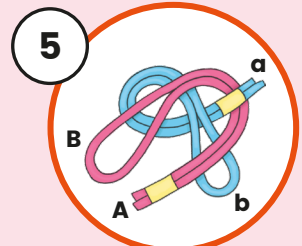
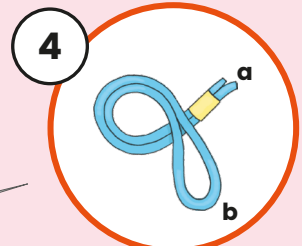
Embroidery silk

Large needle



What to do

- 1 Measure your wrist (not too tight!). Cut the cord to the same measurement.
- 2 Measure the clasp and cut this length from the cut piece of cord. This is your measuring cord.
- 3 Cut two pieces of cord measuring at least 56cms. Fold one piece in half and tape the ends together using the masking tape. Repeat with the other piece of cord.
- 4 Take one piece of the long taped pieces of cord and make a loop with the taped end on the underside pointing upwards.
- 5 Take the second piece of taped cord and place it on top and under the loop you've made.
- 6 Now wrap end A under the loop and over B and back under the loop. Pull all four ends tight.
- 7 Finish your bracelet by bringing the ends of the cord together. The taped ends need to be shorter than the looped ends. Cut both taped ends (a and A) to about 2.5 to 3.5cms from your knot.
- 8 Place the measuring cord you made in Step 1 next to your bracelet and make sure the knot aligns to the centre of the cord.
- 9 Take one of the looped ends and fold it back over itself so that it lines up with the end of your measuring cord. Take the taped end of the bracelet and place it over the folded side. Mark a line where the cords meet.
- 10 Unfold the longer, marked cord and tape over the mark. Trim at the line and repeat on the other side.
- 11 Slide the clasp on to one end of the longer cord. Fold it to meet and glue where the end meets. Cover with tape. Repeat on the other side to make a loop for the clasp.
- 12 Finish your bracelet by wrapping embroidery silk round the masking tape.

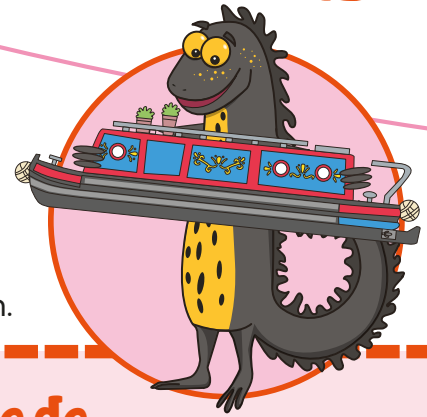


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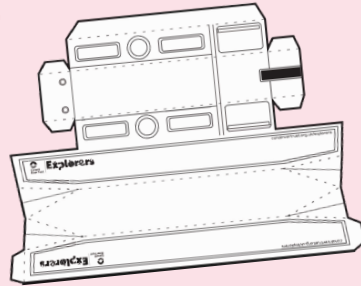
Make a Narrowboat

Canals and rivers are home to thousands of boaters who make up our boating community. Nowadays, the whole narrowboat is used as living space, but when working boaters lived on board, delivering cargo across the country, whole families lived in the tiny cabin at the back of the boat which measured just 2m x 3m.

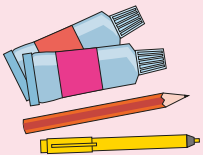


You will need

Narrowboat template, labelled to show living and cargo spaces



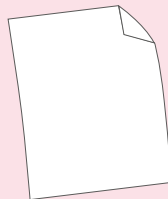
Pens, pencils or paints



Scissors



Paper or thin card



Glue



What to do

- Colour in and decorate the narrowboat template. Stick the template onto thin card to make it stronger
- Cut out the template carefully, fold along the dashed and dotted lines and tease into shape
- Cut along the lines underneath the boat near the bow and stern, fold the remaining flap and pinch together the bow and stern
- Put glue on the tabs and stick together

Top TIP



Use scissors to gently score the dashed and dotted lines before folding the card or paper.



Next Steps → → → →

Look out for Narrowboats!

It can be fun to spot narrowboats when you visit a canal or river. Take a look at shapes and sizes, names, colours and the way they are decorated.

You can find out more in books, magazines and on the internet too, or by visiting one of the many museums and attractions along our waterways. See how much you can find out about them.

Remember: Our boaters share their home with all the other visitors to our canals and rivers. Please do not disturb them when you visit.



Share your creations and ideas with us
on social media #LifesBetterByWater



Canal Bakes: Make Life Ring Cookies

Why not hold a canal-themed bake sale to help us with our work? The money you raise could pay for litter pickers, community art projects, creating wildlife habitats and much more. Life rings are positioned along our canals and rivers, to be used in an emergency. They are the inspiration behind these biscuits.



You will need

- 50g caster sugar
- 100g softened unsalted butter
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 175g plain flour
- 200g icing sugar and 1-2 teaspoons hot water
- Food colouring
- Large round biscuit cutter and a smaller biscuit cutter.

What to do

- Preheat the oven to 180C (160C fan) and line a baking tray with baking paper
- Mix the sugar, butter, egg yolk and vanilla extract together to make a soft paste
- Add the flour to make a dough
- Dust the work surface and rolling pin with flour and roll to a thickness of a £1 coin
- Cut out circles using the big cutter then make into rings by cutting out the centre
- Place on baking tray and bake for 10 minutes until golden. Leave on the tray to cool
- Mix the water and icing sugar. Use food colouring to make different colours and decorate



Top TIP



Add the water to the icing sugar a teaspoon at a time to get the right consistency.

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Think of other creative ways to raise money to help your community. How about a sponsored litter pick, or completing a canalathon with your friends, walking 26.2 miles between you.



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