
The "Plastic Wrap Board" a Space Age Flannel Board

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Your students will love the colorful combinations of pictures and text they (and you) create with "space age" materials which update the traditional flannel board. Rather than using cloth to stick pictures or word strips to a flannel covered board, you can "magically" attach beautifully laminated, full color pictures to cardboard covered with clear plastic wrap.

A Variety of Uses

Different combinations of materials and methods add versatility to this ingenious device. For example, words can be written on inch-wide strips of colored paper or cardboard. (For erasable signs, laminate the strips *before* lettering; for permanent use, laminate them afterwards.) To use these words for practicing sentence construction, place them randomly on the board and then have students arrange them to form declarative sentences. Then, challenge students to come forward to rearrange the sentences into questions, to add past or future tense markers, or even to combine sentences.

Students can also rearrange pictures on the vinyl board according to the teacher's instructions. Reminiscent of TPR, this technique helps students remember concepts. It is also very good for visually demonstrating prepositional relationships like *over*, *under*, *in*, and *around*.

Appealing pictures can be used for many purposes, such as to illustrate lexical items. Both sides of plastic coated picture

cards can be used for practicing singular/plural or past/future. Color coded verbs, nouns, or prepositions help students learn their functions. In a "table-setting" activity, students can even practice lexical items, prepositional relationships, and etiquette by arranging pictures of silverware and dishes in their required places.

Materials and Construction

Ordinary corrugated cardboard can provide a light, inexpensive board surface. Even better is "foamboard," available in bright colors. Artists and draftsmen use this material with its smooth paper surface and styrofoam core.

This board is then covered with clear plastic wrap. Among those varieties which have proven successful are household plastic wraps or wraps used by restaurants (which sometimes offer better adhesion and strength). Inexpensive "stretch" or "shrink" wrap materials prove especially "tacky" and provide stronger adhesion.

Variety stores sell seasonal window decorations of "static cling" vinyl, which is designed for excellent adhesion. Inexpensive yet heavy clear vinyl plastic also works well. It is important to get the type which feels sticky to the touch. Many vinyls, apparently treated to overcome this "problem," do not offer the tack needed. A yard of this material can be thumbtacked or taped to a wall or chalkboard. This vinyl anchors pictures or letters even better than the clear plastic wrap.

Laminating pictures and cards makes them stick to the board. Observe your laminator to see if it always produces a curl in the same orientation each time. If so, laminate materials so that the concave side faces the board.

If a laminator is not available, clear, pressure-sensitive plastic, which is separated from its backing and placed on the picture or card, can accomplish the same purpose. In fact, this material seems to provide the best results. This film can even be stuck on the back of laminated materials to increase their adhesion.

Other techniques for fastening items to the board can be used. For example, rather than sticking items directly to the display board, use an intermediate material. A square foot of cardboard covered with clear plastic will adhere nicely to the board and provide a base for mounting other materials. (The square foot sticks to the plastic-wrap board securely because of its large surface area.) Several small pieces of sticky-back velcro can be attached to this intermediate board. The mating pieces of velcro can be stuck to small objects, which can then be mounted on the board. Velcro also adheres well to some carpeting and various types of cloth.

Still other materials will readily stick to a plastic-covered display board. For example, tacky-back notes (new or re-cycled) can be taped to the back of the items to be displayed so that the tacky surface is exposed for adhesion to the board. Double coated tape will also work, as will the convenient sticky "dots" used these days to fasten down drafting paper. (These dots will remain sticky if after removal they are immediately parked on a clean surface like a page protector.) 3M

Scotch #811 removable (blue label) tape also provides the right adhesion for holding laminated cards.

A postage-stamp size piece of clear, old fashioned vinyl can be taped to small objects. The vinyl "stamp" will then stick to the display board. This technique has been used successfully to attach miniature "cans" of food, made of paper and sold as toys for children "playing house." Other toy sets, such as a "doctor's kit" or miniature toy kitchen, are sold in variety stores and lend themselves to many classroom activities.

A Free-Standing Display Board

Many teachers will find it convenient to make a board which is hinged for convenient storage or ease in carrying it. To make one, start with a rectangular piece of foamboard, one foot wide by three feet long. Draw two lines which divide this board into three equal sections. Draw one line on one side of the board and the other on the other side. Cut only halfway through each of these lines. (The remaining, uncut paper makes a fine hinge.) This rectangular board can now be folded into a "Z", one third of its original size. Not opened completely, this board will stand nicely on a table or desk.

Since plastic wrap boards are almost free of cost, you may want to make several of them. Small groups of students can each work with a different topic on their board and then rotate with other groups.

Students love variety and appreciate creative ways to practice their language skills. Students also love teachers who bring new ideas to the classroom.