

Plan and make our helper

Lesson at a glance

Open with the shared classroom problem — pencils rolling off the table — and invite children to act out what happens. Capture two or three helper ideas on the board, then give each table a short hands-on look at the junk tray (no tape yet). Pairs draw a quick plan on scrap paper and build one small helper with tape, fixing wobbles as they go. Close by drawing the problem and helper on the Investigation Journal page and storing the builds for the next share.

Learning objectives

- Name a small classroom problem the helper will solve
- Draw a quick plan for a simple helper
- Make a first helper from junk-modelling materials and fix it as they go

Before the bell – prep

Set one junk tray per table the night before (small boxes, card scraps, lolly sticks). Keep masking tape and safe scissors aside until the make step. Pre-draw one simple tray-edge plan to model. Put scrap paper and Investigation Journal pages ready on each table.

**Materials**

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
small cardboard boxes (junk-modelling)	6	group	classroom	clean food cartons from home collections
cardboard tubes	6	group	classroom	kitchen roll tubes cut shorter
scrap paper and card	1	group	classroom	used drawing paper or old folders cut into pieces
lolly sticks	10	group	classroom	strip off-cuts of stiff card
masking tape	1	group	classroom	sticky tape on a dispenser the teacher controls
safe scissors (round-tip)	1	pair	classroom	one shared scissors station with an adult
scrap paper for a quick plan	1	pair	classroom	the back of used paper
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	provided printable	a blank drawing page if the journal page is unavailable

Safety watch-point

Supervise safe scissors; adults make tricky cuts. Keep tape and small off-cuts off the floor. Builds stay below shoulder height.



Teaching moves

- **Look at the problem:** Hold up a real pencil that has rolled off a table. Ask ‘Who has seen this happen? Show me with your hands.’ Keep materials away. If a child offers a different problem, thank them and park it for another day so the whole class solves the same need.
- **Talk and share ideas:** Whole-class talk on the shared problem only. Sketch two or three child ideas as simple shapes on the board. Say the word helper aloud — a simple thing we make to fix a real classroom problem — and keep helpers small enough to hold in two hands.
- **Explore the making tray:** Put out the junk trays with tape and scissors still off the table. Ask which pieces feel strong, which bend, and what could make a wall or tray edge. Model one sentence: ‘I think this box could hold pencils because it has sides.’ Move on while eagerness is high.
- **Make our helper:** Bring out tape and safe scissors. First two minutes: each pair draws a quick plan on scrap paper. Then build — tape is the main join. Show only a short live fix (a loose lip gets longer tape or a lolly-stick brace), then let pairs make their own. Name fixing as you go: ‘If it wobbles, we change it and try again.’
- **Draw our helper:** Hold up the Investigation Journal page. Children draw the problem and the helper they made; a name or emergent label is fine if ready. Ask orally ‘Who does your helper help?’ Store unfinished builds with the class for the later share.

What it should show

Most pairs will make a small tray, wall, pot or stand that roughly tries to stop pencils rolling. Wobbly joins and unfinished-but-started builds are fine. Redirect pairs who copy a teacher model wholesale or who start a big fancy build — keep it small enough for two infant hands.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **‘It has to be big and fancy or it doesn’t count.’** — Hold up two small tray pieces and say helpers stay small enough to hold in two hands. Point back at the junk tray and invite one simple edge or wall only.
- **‘If it falls apart we failed.’** — When a join loosens, celebrate the fix out loud: ‘It came loose, so we add more tape — that is what makers do.’ Name mending as success, not a problem.
- **Children start sticking during the explore look and use up making time.** — Keep tape and scissors off the explore tray. Say clearly ‘looking hands only for now’ and bring joins out only when plans are drawn.

**Differentiation**

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Offer a ready small box as a base so the pair only adds one edge or wall. • Sit at the teacher table and help them point to the problem before they draw.	• Prompt one fix-as-you-go change: 'What could make that side stronger?' • Ask them to show with their hands how the pencils will stay put.	• If finished early, add one second feature from the same tray (a lid or a label space). • Ask them to tell a neighbour one thing they would change next time.

Cross-curricular hook

Links to Aistear construction play and oral language — children name the problem and explain who their helper helps.

