

Make a Covered Wagon

Materials needed:

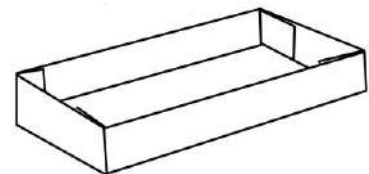
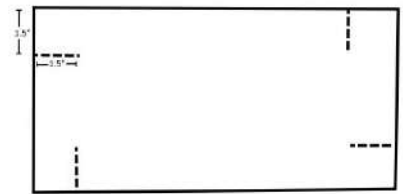
- 6 1/2" x 11" cardstock for wagon bed
- 8"x11" white cardstock for cover
- Cardboard or cardstock for wagon wheels and seat
- 6" Chenille stem/pipe cleaner or yarn
- Ruler
- Pencil
- Marker or crayon for wheel
- Scissors
- Paper punch
- Glue or double stick tape
- A circular object with an approximately 2 3/4" diameter to use as a template to draw wheels. (ex: glass, roll of tape, jar lid.)



Directions:

Wagon Bed

1. Fold in 1 1/2" on each edge of the wagon bed paper. Fold the paper over a straight edge, like a ruler, to make sharp folds.
2. Mark cutting lines on the wagon bed as shown with dotted lines. Each cutting line should be on a fold and 1 1/2" inches long.
3. Cut the paper on the 1 1/2" cutting lines. This creates a tab at each corner of the paper.
4. Make the wagon bed by folding all four sides up, and each tab in. Tape or glue each tab in place.
5. Punch 2 holes in the center of one short side.
6. Create the wagon's tongue by threading the yarn or chenille stem through the holes leaving most of the length on the outside.. Tie or twist it to itself to hold it in place.
7. Cut a piece of paper approximately 2 1/2" x 1 3/4" to use as the wagon's seat. Fold the paper in in half, and glue or tape on one short end of the wagon.



Wheels

8. Draw around a circular object to make four circles approximately 2 3/4" in diameter.
9. Cut out wheels. Draw a rim, hub, and spokes on each wheel.
10. Attach two wheels to each side of the wagon.

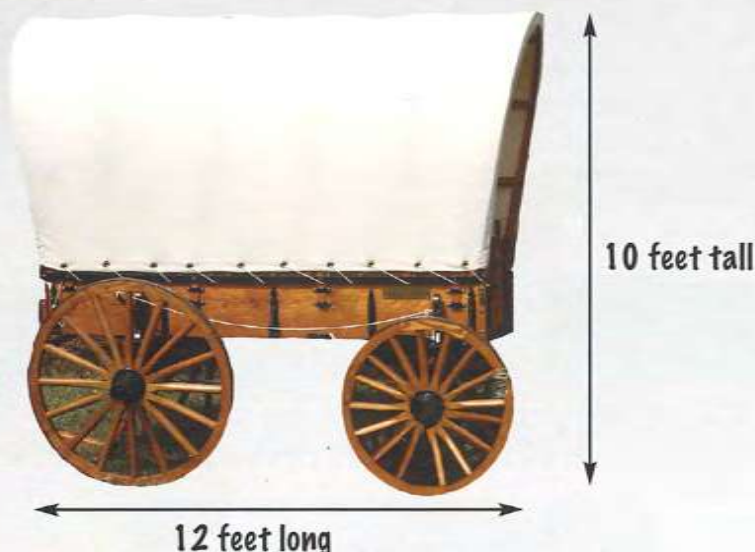
Wagon Cover

11. Place cover inside wagon bed. Glue in place if desired.

Cruising *Through* Kansas

Prairie Schooner

Families traveling the Oregon-California Trail packed their belongings in a wagon called a prairie schooner. These wagons had to be small enough to manage the steep trails through the high Rocky Mountains.



- Weight: 1,300 pounds empty
- Carries 2,000 pounds
- Pulled by 4 to 6 oxen or 6 to 10 Mules
- Width : 4 feet

Ford Explorer

Families today might choose to travel long distances in a sport utility vehicle. They have many qualities that make for a comfortable ride, including air conditioning, heating, power steering, and brakes.



- Weight: 4,615 pounds empty
- Holds 22 gallons of gas
- Carries 7 people and luggage
- Width: 6 Feet

Conestoga Wagon

People transporting large quantities of goods on the Santa Fe Trail often chose freight wagons such as the conestoga. These wagons were large and could carry heavy loads.

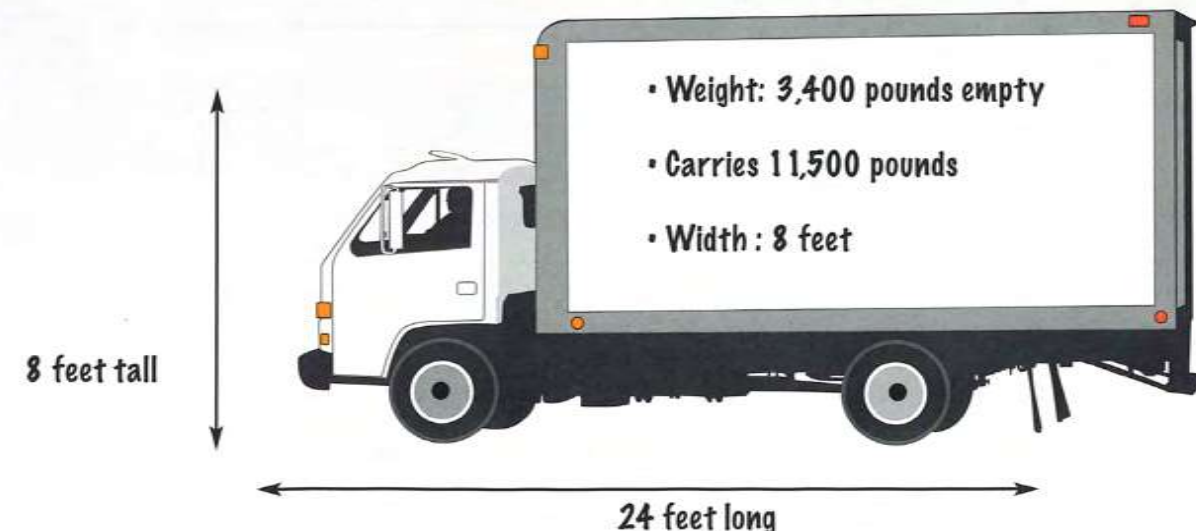
- Weight: 3,500 pounds empty
- Carries 6,000 pounds
- Width : 4 feet



Photo Credit: Library of Congress

Freight Truck

Today people often use freight trucks to haul goods long distances. Most trucks have air conditioning, power steering, and brakes. Trucks come in all shapes and sizes to fit your needs.



- Weight: 3,400 pounds empty
- Carries 11,500 pounds
- Width : 8 feet

The Santa Fe Trail: 1821 - 1880

For hundreds of years New Mexico was governed by Spain. The city of Santa Fe was the capital of New Mexico.

Spain made it illegal for residents in New Mexico to trade with anyone other than Spain. All supplies the people needed had to be shipped from Spain. The price of goods was very high.

In 1806 Lt. Zebulon Pike was exploring the west for the U.S. government. Pike and his men were lost and wandered onto land owned by Spain. He was arrested and taken to Santa Fe. When he was released, he returned to the United States. Pike told people about the high prices people in Santa Fe were paying for goods like clothing, tools, and perfume.

Many U.S. traders were interested in trying to profit off trade with Santa Fe. A few men slipped in and out of Santa Fe, trading illegally. Those men made big profits. Most men, however, either were arrested or had their goods taken away by the Spanish soldiers.

The Mexican people finally grew tired of being controlled by Spain. In 1821 they fought with Spain and won their independence. Mexico became its own country.

Mexico immediately welcomed trade with the United States. The United States had many manufactured items that people in Mexico wanted. These included candle molds, medicine, fabric, coffee mills, slate pencils, and clothes. Mexico had many raw materials that businesses in the U.S. wanted. These included beaver pelts, wool from sheep, gold, silver, and burros.

The Trail Opens

In September of 1821 William Becknell left Missouri with a few pack animals loaded with goods. He traveled more than 800 miles on the Santa Fe Trail, arriving in Santa Fe in November. Almost 500 miles of his trip went through Kansas. In Santa Fe, Becknell sold his goods, making large profits. He became the first person to trade goods legally with Mexico. The Santa Fe Trail now was open for business.



The Cimarron Route was shorter by some 100 miles. It was more dangerous, however, because of a shortage of water.

Traders, who usually were men, used the trail during the spring, summer, and fall. Trade goods were packed in large conestoga wagons. Some wagons were so big that the wheels measured 7 feet high. Many carried up to 6,000 pounds of goods. They often used teams of up to 24 oxen or mules to pull the wagons. The trip usually took 50 to 60 days one way with wagons traveling about 15 miles per day.

Hazards of the Trail

Lack of water was one of the most common problems along the Santa Fe Trail. In 1823 a group of traders ran out of water. They became so desperate that they killed buffalo and drank the blood to survive.



Another story tells of a few businessmen in California who took advantage of the water shortage. They filled barrels with water and headed east on the trail to find thirsty travelers. These men sold water for \$1, \$5, and even \$100 per glass.

Weather always was a potential danger along the trail. Storms sometimes came up very suddenly. In 1840 one trader lost 400 mules from his herd of 740 in a snowstorm.

Changes on the Trail

In 1838 Mexico began charging tax, a fee paid to the government, on each wagon that came into Santa Fe. Because the tax was \$500 for each wagon, many traders began building bigger and bigger wagons. That way they could bring more goods, yet pay the same tax.

In 1846 the United States declared war on Mexico. When the war ended in 1848, Santa Fe was no longer a part of Mexico. From then on, Santa Fe and much of the southwest was now a part of the United States.

In 1880 the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway reached Santa Fe. The train was able to move more goods faster and safer than wagons. The dangerous and exciting days of the Santa Fe Trail were over.



Conestoga wagons were often used to haul freight on the Santa Fe Trail.

THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAIL: 1843 - 1869

Beginning in the early 1840s, many people wanted to move from the eastern states to new land in the West. Settlers relied on the Oregon-California Trail as the main road. This trail was a 2,000 mile route from Independence, Missouri, to Oregon and California. More than 165 miles of the trail was in Kansas.

Mostly families traveled this trail, heading west to a better life. Some went all the way to Oregon to farm. Beginning in 1849 many others traveled to California in search of gold. Either way, the trip always began in early spring.

Travelers would arrive in Independence, Missouri, to set up camp and wait for the grass to grow along the Oregon Trail. The grass provided food for their oxen. Here they would stock up on last-minute supplies and gather groups, or wagon trains, to travel together.

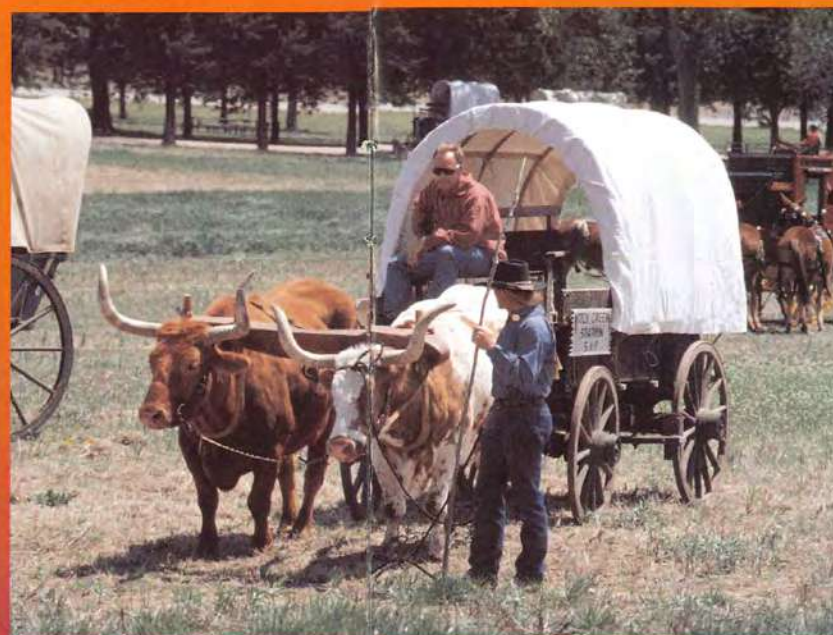
Most families outfitted their farm wagons for the trip. Wagons held up to 2,000 pounds of food and supplies. They had cotton covers treated with linseed oil to keep the rain out. Horses, mules, or oxen pulled the wagons. The trip took four to six months, traveling about 15 miles per day.

HARDSHIPS ON THE TRAIL

Once the trip began, many people found they had overpacked. The animals were not able to complete the trip pulling such heavy loads. They were forced to lighten their loads by throwing things overboard. Travelers quickly learned that clocks, chairs, and stoves were not essential for trail travel. Most travelers also were required to walk the 2,000-mile journey to avoid adding too much weight for the "engine" (oxen, horses, mules) to pull.

There were many accidents along the way. Wagons tipped over or broke wheels and axles on rocky and muddy roads. When the wagon train came to a river, it would sometimes take five days for all the wagons to get across. While crossing, some wagons were swept away by river currents, tipped over, or broken apart. Going downhill could be especially dangerous, as many of the wagons had no brakes.

Wagons used by families on the Oregon-California Trail were similar to conestoga wagons. Called prairie schooners, they were smaller in size. Can you imagine living in a wagon like this for six months?



The 2,000-mile Oregon-California Trail cut across the corner of Kansas.

It was hard to keep clean on the trail. Because things weren't clean, diseases spread quickly among the travelers. Cholera was a real danger. Some wagon trains lost two-thirds of their people to this quick spreading disease. Native Americans who came in contact with the trail travelers also suffered terribly.

Another danger to settlers was weather. Summer months brought thunderstorms, lightning, and hail. Some people were killed by lightning or hail the size of baseballs. All in all, about 1 in 10 people did not survive the journey.

CHANGES ON THE TRAIL

From the 1840s to the 1860s more than 300,000 people used the Oregon-California Trail. On May 10, 1869, a very important event occurred. Two great railroads, the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific, were joined together in Utah. This first trans-continental railroad allowed people to travel across the entire United States by train. The comfort and speed of train travel brought an end to the Oregon-California Trail era.

Can You Guess?

What was round, flat, and dark brown and found all over the prairies in Kansas in the 1800s? Here are some hints.

- Kids on the trail often gathered these items for their families to use.
- These items were used to build fires for warmth and cooking.
- Kids sometimes tossed them back and forth playing a game similar to Frisbee.

