

Tipi diorama instructions:

This is my favorite project for second graders. It can be easily adapted to older children too.

Cut out tipi pattern and trace onto heavy paper (construction paper or oak tag). [If you wish to have something permanent ,you might consider tracing onto a piece of thin craft leather.]

Decorate one side of the tipi [you may wish to research American Indian symbols in advance for the children to view or you may just wish to let the children make up their own designs.] The decorated side will become the outside of the tipi. Remember that the rounded part of the tipi will sit on the ground. The smoke flaps will be at the top. After the tipi is decorated, flip it over to add the tipi poles to the inside [which is the side opposite of the decorations. I use 10-inch bamboo shish kebob skewers obtained from the grocery store as poles.] Scotch tape the poles in place in order from 1 - 6 as shown on the pattern with the blunt end even with the bottom of the tipi. The pointed end of the poles will stick out past the tipi crossing over each other at the point indicated as the top of the tipi. After the poles are taped in place, twist the tipi into a cone with the poles on the inside and glue flaps A and B under the opposite front of the tipi to secure.

Fold the smoke flaps back a bit and poke a skewer into the top corner of each flap. These poles were used to adjust the smoke flaps according to the wind direction. These were usually crossed in back of the tipi and may need to be trimmed shorter to fit. You can then glue the finished tipi to a cardboard or foam board or inside a shoe box and decorate it with stones, sticks, sand, trees, etc. to finish your diorama. You can find model trees, artificial grass, sand, stones, etc. in a hobby shop in the model train section.

Check with your librarian for a book called Houses of Hide and Skin by Bonnie Shemie. It will give you lots of information about tipis and is written at the 2nd grade level. Older children or the teacher / group leader may wish to read the definitive work on tipis which is The Indian Tipi by Reginald & Gladis Laubin published by the University of Oklahoma Press.

Good luck and have fun!
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