

Barbie



“Barbie I Can Be...Architect” Workshop

Duration: 45 minutes

Aim

The purpose of the workshops is to give young girls a basic understanding of the architectural profession, the importance of architects to the built environment, the long history of women architects, and a glimpse into the design process. The workshop is intended to be fun and informative at the same time. Below is a script to follow which includes a planning design exercise that relates to the Barbie brand and that fosters a child’s understanding of spatial relationships by asking them to design Architect Barbie’s Dream House.

Script

1. Introduction: Architect introduces herself, says that she is an architect and where she lives.
2. What is an architect? (5 minutes)
 - Architect asks the girls if they know what an architect does—they design buildings!
 - Architects design buildings, fashion designers design clothing, automotive designers design cars, furniture designers design chairs, tables, beds, etc, graphic designers design logos, magazines, billboards, etc. In fact EVERYTHING around us was designed by someone.
 - What kinds of buildings do architects design? All kinds of buildings: ask the girls to list the different types of buildings that they can think of—houses, schools, hospitals, museums, shopping malls, etc. Ask the children the following questions:
 - What types of rooms are in a house? A school? A shopping mall?
 - What things does an architect need to think about to design this building?
3. Are there women architects? (5 minutes)
 - Tell the girls that the first woman in this country became an architect 125 years ago. Her name was Louise Bethune and she lived in Buffalo, New York. Since then a lot of women have become architects. Refer to the posters and describe the work of the women architects listed (the printed texts provide you with some information about their practices, but is not intended to be read out loud to the girls):
 - Louise Bethune

- Julia Morgan
 - Jeanne Gang
 - Maryann Thompson
 - Angela O’Byrne
 - Tell them that the newest architect is Architect Barbie!
4. Design Charrette Introduction: (10 minutes)
- Architect Barbie will design all sorts of buildings. She will even design her Dream House! Today we are all going to be architects and design Barbie’s Dream House. Using the flip chart to list all of the ideas, have the girls list all of the components that should be in Barbie’s Dream House. Have them describe in detail some of their ideas.

Design Exercise

5. Creating a floor plan (25 minutes)
- Each child will receive the Mattel grid paper (11 x 17) and will use this as the base for her floor plan. They will also receive a second, colored 11x17 sheet with floor plans of typical rooms found in a house: living room, bedroom, kitchen, etc. The girls will be asked to cut out the rooms and to use them to generate a floor plan.
- STEPS:
- a. Explain to the girls that they are going to create a floor plan for Barbie’s dream house. Explain that before an architect begins designing, she has to decide what her client needs and how these things should be arranged. An architect organizes spaces and functions. For example, if you want to have a kitchen to cook food and a bedroom to sleep, should these things be beside each other? Where does the bathroom go? While some houses have more than one floor (such as the Dream Houses on display), we are going to design everything on one level. Terminology we want them to learn (whenever you introduce new terminology, please write it down on the flip chart.):
 - floor plan
 - function
 - b. Have the girls cut out the rooms on the colored sheet and ask them to lay them out on the Mattel grid paper in an arrangement that they like. You might ask them why they have arranged them in that way. Terminology we want them to learn:
 - layout
 - c. Once they have laid out the rooms, ask them how they get from one room to another. Talk about the importance of hallways. Terminology we want them to learn:
 - circulation

Ask them to glue their rooms to the grid paper.
 - d. Tell them that now that they have arranged their rooms, the rooms need to be sheltered from wind and weather by walls. Explain that the walls can be made of different materials and that architects call the external wall of a building a skin. A building has a skin just like a human has a skin. Ask them to draw a line all around their

rooms to create the exterior wall. Ask them what their wall is made of. Terminology we want them to learn:

- skin
- exterior wall
- materials

e. Now that they have built the wall, ask them how light will get in the house so it is not dark. Using another color pencil, ask them to create lines in the wall showing where the window will be. (Demonstrate this for them first, so they know how to do it.) Ask why windows are important (light, air). Mention that an architect is concerned with creating a building that is healthy—that an architect is a little like a doctor of buildings, thinking about the health of the users and how to make healthy buildings. Healthy buildings need light and air. Terminology we want them to learn:

- light
- ventilation

f. Ask how they will get into their house. Using a different colored pencil, have them draw a door. Ask them why they put their door where they did. Terminology we want them to learn:

- entrance

g. When they look out the windows of their house, what do they see? Tell them that an architect also thinks about the outside of the building, where the building is located, called the site. An architect will design differently if a building is located on a mountain or by the ocean or in a desert. Mention that there are special kinds of architects, called landscape architects, who design the gardens and trees all around a building. Ask the girls to think about the landscape outside their house. What would they like on the outside, to see from their windows and also play in? A lake? A small forest? Lots of flowers? Terminology we want them to learn:

- landscape
- site

h. Finally, ask the girls what it is like living in this house. What makes it a special place?

i. If time remains in the workshop, you can explain what an architectural section is, using the current dream house (on display) as an example. Or, using another piece of graph paper, you can help the girls generate elevations based on their plans.

6. Workshop is adjourned