



Raising Generation AI

Summer screen-free series: Crafty recycling

AI Skill: Image understanding, text generation

Scenario: A pile of stuff heading for the recycling bin becomes the raw material for something new. AI looks at a photo of what you've got, factors in what your child's into, and writes step-by-step instructions for something they can build.

What you need

- ChatGPT or Gemini (free versions work fine, and need to support photo uploads)
- Whatever's in your recycling - cardboard, tubes, tubs, etc.
- Basic craft supplies you already have (tape, pens, scissors, glue)

How to do it

1. Take a photo of the recycling items you want to use. Decide your child's age and note what they're currently into.

Privacy note: Check the photo before uploading it. Recycling bin photos can easily catch things in the background - addressed post, medication boxes, a calendar, anything with a name or address on it. Crop the photo or clear the background first if in doubt.

2. Open the AI app and paste this prompt, attaching the photo:

Look at this photo of recycling items. Also available: [craft supplies, e.g. sticky tape, felt tip pens, scissors]. My child likes [child's interests, e.g. dinosaurs, space, football].

Design something a [child's age]-year-old could build using only what's in the photo plus the listed supplies, drawing on their interests for inspiration without needing to match them exactly. Give the instructions as numbered steps, one simple action per step, in the style of flat-pack furniture instructions. Keep each step short and specific about which item to use. Suggest one simple way to decorate or finish it at the end.

3. Read through the steps and check they're realistic for what you've actually got available.
4. Help gather the exact items listed, then let your child follow the steps and build.

Good to know

- Some AI tools may return the instructions as an image rather than plain text. If you'd rather have plain text, add "give me the steps as plain text, not an image" to the end of the prompt.
- If the idea doesn't feel achievable with what you've got, ask the AI to simplify.
- Keep the build itself supervised, especially if it involves scissors.

Take it further

- As your child to make their own instructions for a brother or sister to follow with some other recycling items