

HATS OFF TO VANBRUGH! COMPETITION

To celebrate Vanbrugh 300, we're inviting young designers, makers and imaginative minds to take part in our special competition: Hats Off to Vanbrugh! Sir John Vanbrugh wasn't just an architect — he was a dramatist, a rule-breaker and a creator of some of the most extraordinary buildings in Britain.

Now it's your turn to step into his shoes.

Your Challenge

No matter where you live in Britain, take part in this fun competition to design your very own piece of wearable architecture that reflects one of Vanbrugh's incredible buildings. It could be one of the houses you've visited during VANBRUGH300 with your family, or better yet, a Vanbrugh building you've explored through photos, videos or online research. Think big. Think bold. Think Baroque.

Your hat could be: a towering dome, a dramatic façade, a miniature castle, a swirling staircase or a completely imaginative interpretation of Vanbrugh's style.

As long as it's wearable and inspired by his architecture, it counts.

There are two age categories: 5 - 7 and 8 - 11

How to Take Part

1. Choose a Vanbrugh building that inspires you. Take a look at six of his greatest creations at www.vanbrugh300.co.uk or search online for other images.
2. Design and make a wearable architectural hat using any materials you like — cardboard, paper, fabric, recycled items, craft materials, or a mix. A guide and ideas for inspiration are included in this pack.
3. Take a clear photo of yourself wearing your finished creation.
4. Send your photo with your name, age, and the name of the building that inspired your design. to: vanbrugh300@georgiangroup.org.uk. Subject line: Hats Off to Vanbrugh.

Closing date: 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

Winners will be notified by email by: 16 OCTOBER 2026

What We're Looking For

- Creativity and imagination
- A clear link to Vanbrugh's architecture
- Bold shapes, dramatic ideas and playful details
- A hat that shows you've thought like an architect and a costume designer

Prizes

Winners in each age category will not only have their designs showcased online, but they will also win a family ticket to visit one of the Vanbrugh partner sites involved in Vanbrugh 300.

- Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire
- Castle Howard, North Yorkshire
- Seaton Delaval hall, Northumberland
- Grimsthorpe Castle, Lincolnshire
- Stowe House, Buckinghamshire
- Kimbolton Castle, Cambridgeshire



GETTING STARTED...

- Look at pictures online of the building you have chosen. There are lots of pictures on the Vanbrugh 300 website to get you started – vanbrugh300.co.uk.
- What words would you use to describe the building? What's your first idea when you see this building? What jumps out at you?
- Which 2D shapes can you see in the building design?
- Which 3D shapes can you see in the building design?
- Is the building symmetrical? Can you build symmetry into the design of your hat?

Top tips:

Here is a suggestion for constructing the hat base:

- Cut a long strip of card and wrap it around your head. Staple it so that it fits securely on your head. You may need an adult to help with this.
- Cut out a base shape (or one front piece and one back piece) for your building design. You can add sides later if you wish. You can then create your design before you construct it into a hat making the sticking and adding detail far easier.
- Finally, staple the different pieces of your building design to the headband and take your photo.

Don't forget:

Once your design is complete do the following:

1. Take a photo of you wearing it
2. Email the photo to vanbrugh300@georgiangroup.org.uk with 'Hats Off to Vanbrugh' in the subject line.
3. Don't forget to include your name, age and the name of the building that inspired your design in the email.

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Techniques and ideas...



Layering

Layer different size shapes and paper colours to create details and depth.



Symmetry

Make your hat symmetrical like lots of Vanburgh's buildings.



Colours

Use different tones of card to show details and parts of your building. Add pops of gold to make your hat sparkle!



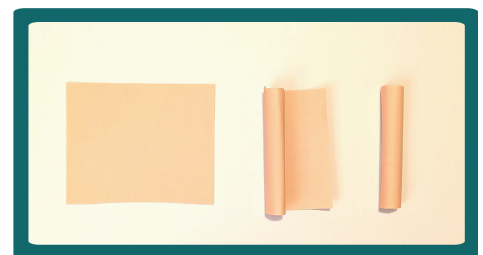
Shapes

Mix and match shapes to make parts of your building.



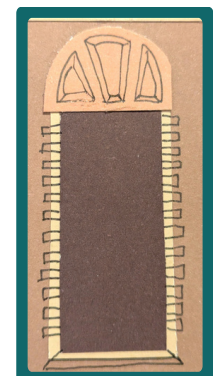
Make it 3D

Add 3D elements. Roll paper tubes for columns, fold paper to make steps or add a 3D tower or dome.



Details

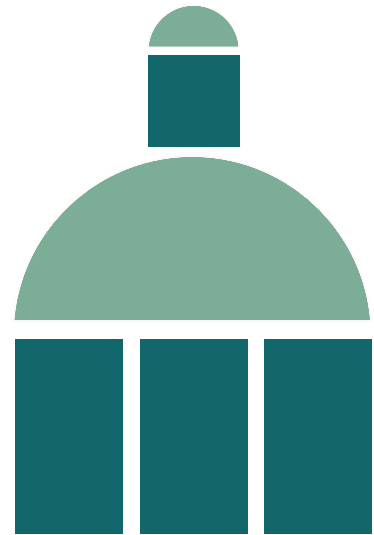
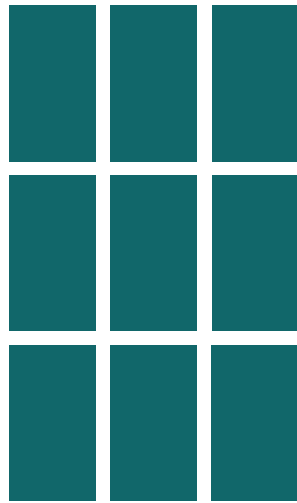
Add details by layering on smaller cut out shapes or using a black pen to draw.



Combining 2D shapes...



What do you see?



What shapes have been used?

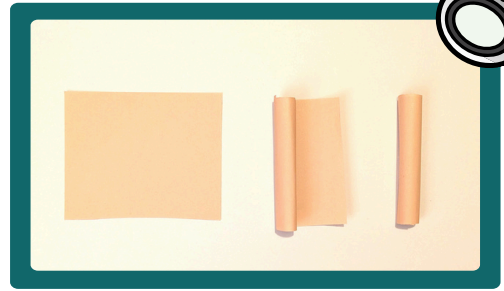
How will you combine 2D shapes to make your design?

3D techniques...



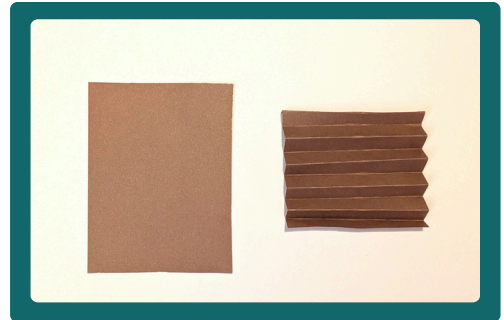
Columns

Roll paper into thin tubes. Secure the edge with glue and then stick onto your hat.



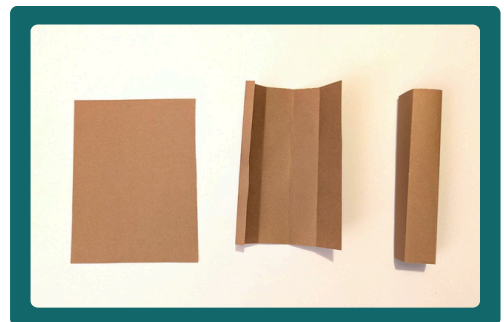
Steps

Cut a piece of card into a rectangle. Concertina fold it to make miniature steps. Glue onto your building.



Tower

Cut a piece of card into a rectangle. Fold into 4 leaving a tab to glue it together.



Plinth

Roll a rectangle of card into a tube a secure with glue. Stick a small square of card at the top and bottom. What will go on your plinth?



Cone

Cut a semi-circle of card. Roll into a cone shape and glue into place.

