

Lighthouse on a String!

We love this activity. All ages will find it fun and educational.



One characteristic of lighthouses that beguiles visitors is height. Towers are fun to climb! They lead us upward into a new realm, the kingdom of the seabird and the clouds!

When kids ask how tall a lighthouse is, try handing them the spindle wrapped in string. It contains a length of yarn that equals your lighthouse's height. Tell kids, "Here's our lighthouse on a string!"

Next, do some fun activities with this creative gadget. Find an open space outside the lighthouse where you can stretch out the string.

Estimate!

First, ask kids to guess how tall the lighthouse is. You can give them small slips of paper to record their guesses. Explain that the string on the spindle equals the height of the lighthouse. Ask kids to imagine laying the lighthouse down on its side on the ground. The string will stretch the length of the reclining lighthouse.

Unroll!

Next, have kids slowly unroll the string while you hold the spindle. The child unrolling the string can walk backward with a buddy leading. In a group, kids can take turns unrolling the string. Every child wants to participate. At least most do.

At the End of the Rope!

Kids should now be amazed at how long the lighthouse is when laid down on the ground. Be ready with some measuring tools. Ask kids what a good standard of measure would be for the string. Some will say inches, which allows you to point out that inches work for things like jump ropes and a person's height, but they are too small for lighthouses. A child will say feet, and that works. Ask what measurement could be used for really big lighthouses. Yards work for this. Tell children that most European lighthouses are measured in meters.

Appoint some kids to measure the length of string with various types of measurements—feet, yards, meters. For kids in grades four and above, measure in feet and have them convert to meters. Take a moment to look up at the lighthouse and ask

students if it looks as tall as the string is long. Many objects look bigger laying on the ground than standing upright.

Have Some Fun!

Younger kids really enjoy playing imaginary games. Here's a chance to play some! Have kids line up at the end of the string that attaches to the spindle. Tell them they are going to walk up the lighthouse stairs. Lead them in walking along the string and stop periodically to tell them some interesting facts or stories. When everyone reaches the opposite end of the string, have them imagine they are keepers and ask them what jobs they might need to do now that they are at the top.

Climb the Real Tower!

Okay...kids have had lots of fun preparation for the big moment. It's time to climb! Ask them to—

- Count the steps
- Say something they learned or know about lighthouses with each step
- Guess why the stairs are in the shape of a spiral, or a ladder, or straight up (whatever your tower architecture provides)
- Do a lighthouse alphabet with you as they climb. Step A is for _____; Step B is for _____, and so on
- Sing a song as you climb. (Try substituting new words to the tune of “London Bridge” (“This old light is very high, very high, very high. This old light is very high. I’m going to the top!”) or “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” (“Climb, climb, climb the light, up the winding stairs. Take your time and let it shine, then you’ll have no cares.”))
- Recite the poem, “Who Walked Here?” to kids as you climb

Don't forget to task some kids with rolling up the string on the spindle. It's fun to do and it helps them learn that all games need to be put away when they are done.

