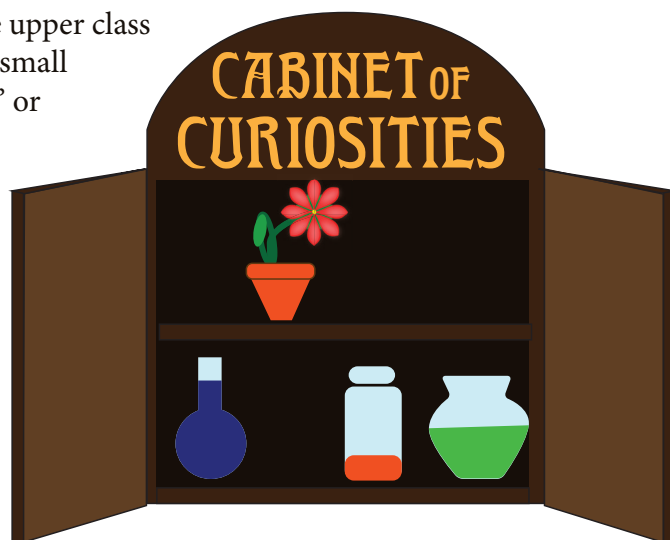


# Cabinet of Curiosity

Beginning in the 17th century, scholars and members of the upper class would display wonders and oddities of the natural world in small rooms or large decorative cases called “cabinets of curiosity” or “wonder rooms.” These exhibits were the precursor for today’s museums.

## What you will need:

- Empty cupboard or a cardboard box
- Scissors
- Paper
- Tape (painter’s tape or scotch tape work best)
- Writing utensil
- Objects for your collection
- Optional: Cloth, ribbon, or other decorative items



## Create your cabinet:

1. **Build your cabinet.** If you are using an existing cupboard, ask permission to clear the shelves to make room for your display. If you are using a cardboard box, add shelves by stacking boxes on top of each other. Tape them together with the openings of each box facing the same way. Optional: Decorate your cabinet or box using cloth, paper, or ribbon.
2. **Plan your exhibit.** Your home is filled with objects that are special to you or that tell a story. Collections can be anything from rocks to toy cars, rubberband balls to favorite stuffed animals. A collection can also tell a story. For example, objects from a vacation, gifts from someone special to you, or items you use when you play a specific sport. If you want to curate a funny collection, you could make an exhibit of missing socks, or objects found in the couch cushions.
3. **Arrange your collection.** Just like today’s museum exhibits, cabinets of curiosity were artfully displayed. Come up with an interesting way to organize your collection. For example, you could display them by size, color, shape, the age of each object, or even where they were first found.
4. **Add meaning!** Make museum labels for each object in your collection. Labels often include the object’s name, how old it is, where it comes from, and interesting facts museum visitors may want to know.

## Take it further!

Alexandria’s first museum opened in 1811 on the third floor of the Market House, the site of today’s City Hall. Early Alexandrians could visit the museum to view artifacts and “relics” unlike anything they had seen before. Pretend your exhibit is being viewed by someone with no knowledge of the objects you’ve displayed. What additional information should your labels include so that viewers can understand the meaning behind each object? You may need to add information about how each object is used, or who commonly uses them. When you’re ready, give a tour of your museum to someone else in your home.

