



Making A Magic Production Cylinder



The Drum Tube is a very fun production cylinder. They can be purchased at any magic store, but are also easy, and fun, to make. This is a very old classic trick. I tried researching who invented it, but could not find anything. I did find magazine ads from the 1940s selling them. So they are at least that old – I suspect they are much older. Any writing I could find about the drum tube refers to it as a classic. At what point was it not a classic? I enjoy magic history research, but some of the “classics” are lost to history.

For the performance and loading the gimmick watch this YouTube video: https://youtu.be/ZaoTw68va_8

Like many good things, it starts with... chips. Yeah, I like Pringles.

Supplies needed

There are not really a lot of supplies needed for this build. A chip tube, decorative paper, ribbon, rubber bands, crepe paper, and a couple plastic cups.

1. Pringles Can (but I ate some yummy chips)
2. Decorative Paper (you can use construction paper, sticker paper, any decorative paper you want.)
3. Decorations: Ribbon, stickers, paper cut outs, etc.
4. Glitter Glue (optional but fun)
5. Crepe Paper (any color, cut into 6x6 inch squares)
6. Two Cups (approximately 3 inch at the top)
7. Rubber Bands (to perform the trick, later)

My local price for the supplies was \$5.40. Not bad for a multi-use magic prop! I spent less than \$6 and that includes the chips (and the package of cups I did not use). Seems like a bargain to me!



Tools needed

There are minimal tools needed for this build. I recommend using a cutting mat. I like using a cutting mat to protect my desk, and it has lots of useful measurements, angles, and curves. The cutting mat is not required, but I would recommend it. If you cut your table or desk – or get glue on it – someone at your house will likely be mad about it. So protect your table in some way.

1. Scissors
2. Can Opener
3. Glue
4. Pencil
5. Ruler
6. Tape
7. Hobby Knife (optional)



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Constructing the Tube

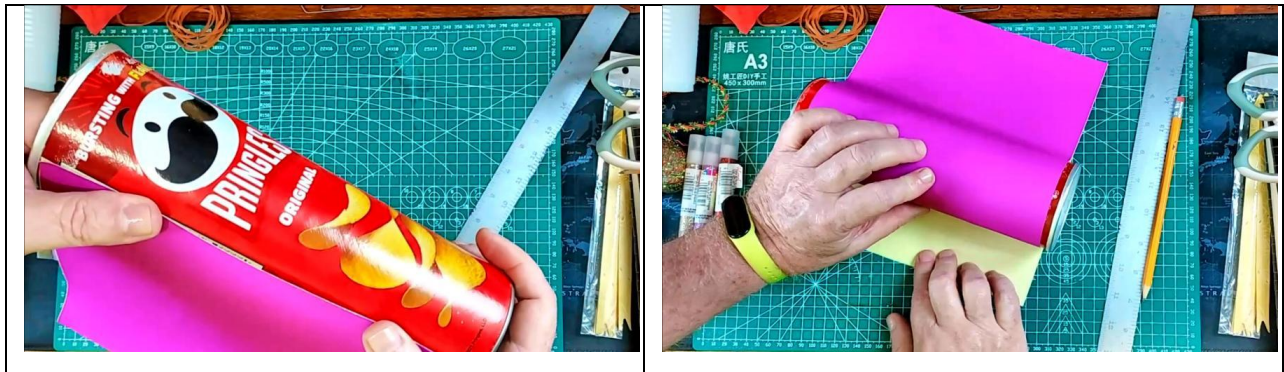
The first step is the most fun part. It is time to empty the chip container. I suppose you could put the chips in a container or bag... but where is the fun in that? Put on a movie and eat the chips ha ha. Now that the tube is empty it is time to cut the bottom off the container.

Using a can opener the bottom of the tube comes right off. Be sure to check for any burrs on the can. File smooth if it needs it. I used an old worn out manual can opener and was shocked that there were no burrs on the container. The can will be full of salt. I did not want to wash the tube because it is just cardboard. I used a towel to wipe the inside as clean as I could get it. With both ends of the can open, you can run the towel back and forth pretty well.



The next step is attaching the paper – either gluing or using a sticker sheet – the step will be quite similar. Measure and cut the paper to fit. Then work very slowly and carefully while you wrap the can. As you attach the paper ensure there are no wrinkles or air bubbles. I found the sticker sheet to be a much neater way to work, and much easier than glue. I will use that method from now on.

You can use any type of paper you have handy. Generally I would have construction paper and would use that. Since I was out of stock, I found some sticker paper and gave that a try. I highly recommend the sticker paper. With construction paper you have to glue the paper to the tube. You can use a glue stick or regular glue. The sticker paper is much easier because it requires no extra glue. Also, if you have a printer, you can put designs directly on the sticker paper for the tube.



Tip - As you begin to attach the paper to the can ensure that the paper is as straight as possible. On some cans the nutrition information is a nicely drawn box. That provides a good straight edge.

After the paper is attached you can let it dry, or go ahead and start decorating. The sticker paper needed no drying time. The paper was not quite long enough to reach both ends of the can, so there was a gap on each end of the can. If your paper will leave a gap you will want to make sure and center the paper, so the gap is on both ends. It will be easier to cover the gap on each end because it will be smaller. One large gap on one end will be more difficult to conceal.

You can cover the ends with any decorations: paper, ribbon, etc. I used some ribbon to cover the gap on the ends. A roll of ribbon would have been a good idea, but the store I was at did not have any rolls in stock. Trim the ribbon to fit, glue it in place, and use a clamp of some kind to hold it in place while the glue dries. I had some nice clips, but tape or even paper clips could work. Just be careful not to damage the decoration or the paper on the tube. Although I did not use a roll of ribbon I highly recommend that you do.



The yellow ribbon was attached with white glue, but for the decorative ribbon I used glitter glue. The ribbon is odd shaped, so needed a lot of glue. The white glue dries clear, but might look lumpy. Using glitter glue allowed me to use even more glue than needed – for the decorative purposes. A win-win.

I was going to decorate the middle of the tube but since my hand covers almost the whole tube, I decided not to. I did not want it to get a cluttered look, and I can always add some decoration later. I was thinking of cutting some paper to make yellow stars and streaks, to make shooting stars on the tube. Like this...



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Preparing The Cups

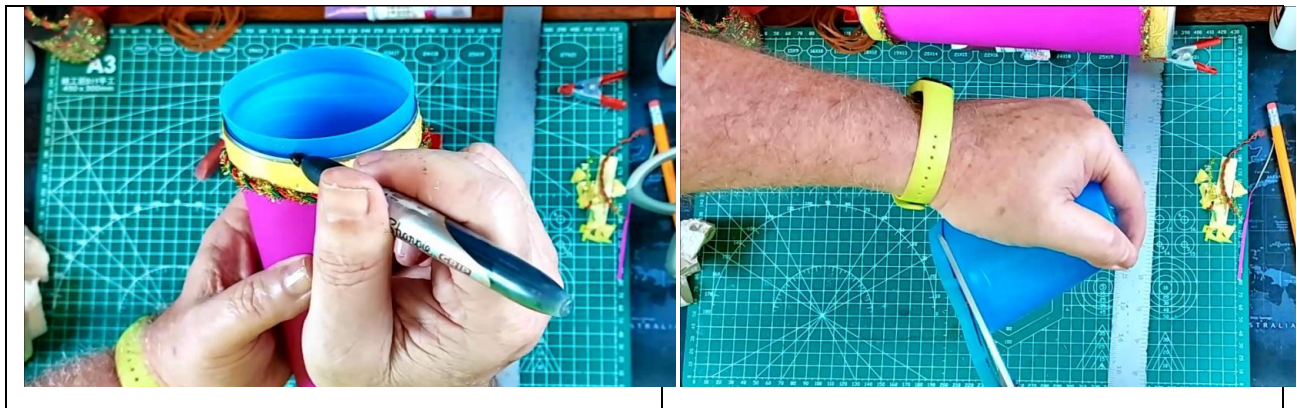
Hopefully you can find a cup that fits the can perfectly. I was not so lucky. A small disposable plastic cup would be ideal because it has a lip around the top of the cup. The lip would really help hold the rubber band in place.

I bought a package of cups without knowing exactly what size I needed. But there were no other options, so I bought them. The cup was too large to fit in the tube. I cut the cup to fit, but by losing the lip on the top of the cup, it also lost all its strength. The rubber band would just crush the cup. I had to find another source for cups.



I ended up using a couple plastic cups from the kitchen. I did ask my wife if she wanted me to buy new ones ha ha. They were also too large; they were the same size as the ones I bought (seem to be a standard size). But these cups are a better plastic. They are firm, but not brittle. So I was able to trim them down to fit. I would still like some cups with a lip (for rubber band management) but these work, and are much sturdier than the disposable cups.

I inserted the cup into the tube and marked it with my Sharpie. Then I just used scissors to cut it. With scissors I was able to get a nice slow, straight, cut. I would not have been able to cut it as neatly using a knife.



The tube and cups are now finished. Set the tube aside to let the glue dry. The white glue, used on the yellow ribbon, dried within an hour. The glitter glue had to dry overnight. I checked it after 2 hours and it was still not dry. Luckily by morning it was fine.



Set the tube aside to let it dry – and LEAVE IT ALONE! (I am yelling at me, not you ha ha)

The Crepe Paper

Cut the crepe paper into 6x6 inch squares. It is best to cut a good supply at one time. You will use a lot of it in rehearsal.

Be very careful working with the crepe paper. It tears very easily. That is good for performing the trick, but bad for preparing the trick. I use the same paper to make hat tears and mouth coils so have had some experience with it. Cutting a single thickness of the crepe paper will usually lead to a lot of tearing the paper. I measure the size I need and fold the paper multiple times.

By cutting 5 or 6 layers of the paper at once, you not only tear it less, you also get more pieces cut at the same time. This is particular handy for making mouth coils, as I need about a hundred strips of paper.

Tips and advice

The Rubber Bands

Here you can see where I put the band, and how it looks on the tube.



Some tips on using the rubber bands. On the tube, if you have some ribbon, or anything making a ridge, try to put the band over it. The crepe paper tears easily, but if the rubber band can slip off... it will. I rehearsed it numerous times with no problem, and while filming the performance I had the paper on the tube slip off twice, instead of tearing, when I put in the loaded cup.

The cup had its own issues. A cup with a lip would be ideal, but we discussed that already. At first I was putting the rubber band way too high on the cup, probably because the first papers were so small. The first picture shows the rubber band too high. It would sometimes hit the top of the tube, and fall off as I loaded the tube. The rubber band popped off maybe 25% of the time. That is far too unrealizable for performing.



The second picture shows the band lower down. There is actually a decent enough lip there as well. With band that low, it is well inside the tube, and does not come in contact with the top of the tube. That is what rehearsals are for. You have to practice the entire trick. If it cost you some crepe paper, so be it. Without actually doing the entire trick, you are not getting a useful rehearsal.



Tip - When performing – or rehearsing – there are going to be some consumable items. Most hobbyist magicians balk at the cost but professionals know it is just the cost of doing business – and doing tricks properly.

Prop Management

Prop management is always an issue. Every time you get a new prop you have to figure where you will store it, how you will store it, can all the pieces be kept together neatly? Luckily this size drum tube fits perfectly in a 1 gallon zip lock bag. There is room for the tube, the cups, pre-cut crepe paper, and rubber bands.



Tip – Always keep extra paper and rubber bands on stage with you. During a performance you may tear the paper or shoot the band across the room. Always have extras!



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The full 18 minute video detailing the construction: <https://youtu.be/duNOrR5Jm90>



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