

Tech News

Tools for sale

I bought 5 sets of tools, one set for Abe and 4 sets to resell to Tech Club members at cost (\$8 a set). These are obviously not top-of-the-line tools, but they are sized well for small hands and are good value for the money.

The tools will be useful not only for the current chainmail project, but also for electronics projects later this year.

I'll have these tool kits available this week.



Electronics projects

In January, after winter break, I'd like to get some kids started on electronics (soldering) projects. Parents can buy kits themselves and have me supervise the kids learning to put them together in Tech Club, or can ask me to purchase kits for them. If parents want help choosing projects at an appropriate level for beginners, I'd be glad to offer advice.

One good set of kits is by Velleman, whose product line is listed on the web at www.vellemanusa.com/us/enu/product/list/?id=523008. Santa Cruz Electronics supposedly carries some of their kits, and the kits can be ordered on-line from several sources (I've used www.ramseyelectronics.com successfully in the past).

Abe has built two of the kits (MK150, shaking dice and K5300, stroboscope). Both are fun, but the stroboscope kit needs additional parts (a power cord and a box).

Scratch T-shirts

If you are looking for a low-cost present for your Tech Club member, consider a Scratch T-shirt. Several different styles are available for \$6–12 from goodstorm.com/stores/scratch



Note, the reason these shirts are cheap is that the Scratch team decided not to take any markup on the shirts—the cost is the cost from the web-based printing service.

Weaving projects?

Is anyone interested in learning to weave in Tech Club? We could do some projects with either simple frame looms or with tablet weaving, which is an off-loom technique good for weaving belts and straps.

Chainmail project

Our first attempt at making chainmail was not very successful. The 14-gauge copper wire (the finest gauge they had at Riverside Lighting) proved to be too thick—it was difficult for most of the kids to cut rings from the coils. I tried using 24-gauge wire also, but it turned out to be too flexible—it doesn't hold its shape well enough to make rings that stay closed. I have ordered some 18-gauge copper wire in colors for chainmail jewelry, but it won't be here until next week. The colored wire is priced as art supplies: fairly expensive at about 10 cents a foot..

Kids were also finding the winding of coils a bit tedious, so I made a simple crank mandrel out of plywood and dowel rod, so that coil winding can be done quickly and easily.

