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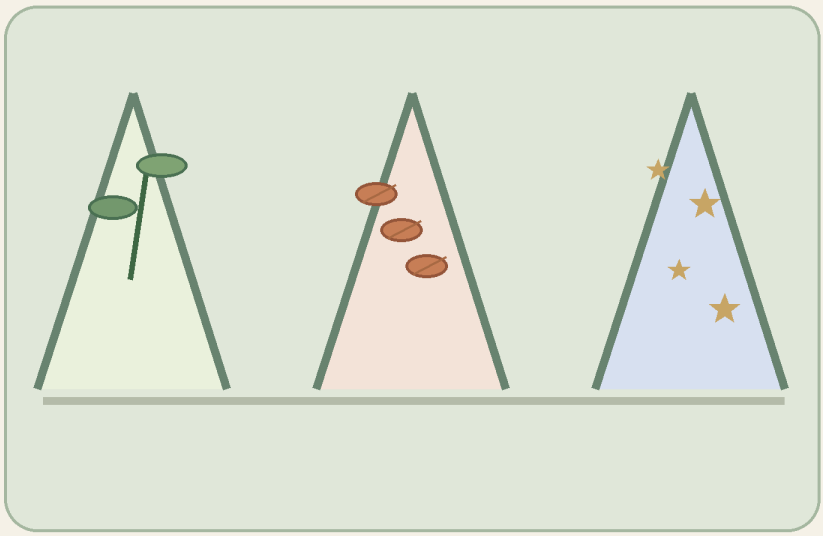
MAKE / FREE PRACTICAL GUIDE



Build a Small Seasonal Table Decoration

Three original folded-paper tabletop scenes for different seasons

ORIGINAL FULL-SIZE TEMPLATE + THREE SCENES

COMPLETE FREE PRACTICAL GUIDE

Three original folded-paper tabletop scenes for different seasons

Make a coordinated trio of original folded-card tabletop scenes with a reusable measurement plan, three seasonal motifs and no candle or electrical component.

STEADLEAF PRESS | MAKE / M15 Personalized Gifts & Home Accents | STP-MAKE-F018

Three small scenes are enough

A seasonal decoration does not need expensive materials or a complicated centerpiece. Three small folded cards can mark a change in the season without taking over a dining table. One features a green shoot, another a turning leaf, and a third a quiet night sky. They share the same simple shape, so it is the drawn or applied motif that changes, not a new buying list every time.

Your project: make three lightweight, tent-style paper table decorations from original **180 x 130 mm** rectangular card blanks. Each blank folds across its 180 mm dimension at the **90 mm midpoint** and stands with its two equal 90 mm sloping panels as an inverted V. Each folded card presents a **130 mm horizontal span** along its top and base; its front-to-back footprint depends on the opening angle. The **full-size A4 or US Letter cutting and fold template is included within the complete free PDF download**, along with the 50 mm calibration bar, three original motif sketches and a placement/condition checklist. Print three blanks or use a ruler to draw them directly on suitable card.

This is a decorative paper object for ordinary adult-managed indoor display, **not a toy, tableware, candle holder, party favor containing food, or certified fire-resistant decoration**. Paper and dry botanical components burn. Never combine this decoration with real candles, burners, heaters or electrical components. Keep it off cooking and serving surfaces and away from toddlers and pets. Do not assume a tent card will stay upright in a draft or crowded table.

1. Choose one seasonal story, then three variations

The project works best when all three pieces feel related. Begin with one restricted palette, such as sage, soft yellow and charcoal for spring; terracotta, copper and brown for autumn; or deep blue, silver-gray and cream for winter. The palette is a personal choice, not a calendar rule or a claim that these colors belong to everyone. Then give the three pieces distinct roles: (A) a single focal motif; (B) a repeating border; (C) an open field with one small signature detail.

For the original sample scheme, **A = First Shoot** uses a curved green stem and two leaves near the centre; **B = Falling Leaf** uses three broad leaf shapes placed in a diagonal rhythm; and **C = Night Stars** uses three hand-drawn stars spaced away from the fold. The names are prompts, not patterns copied from an existing greeting-card company. Each can be recolored to fit a different occasion. If a design needs a name or date, add it with a removable or suitable paper-safe pen rather than buying a special stamp.

Keep the design below the apex crease and within the visible side of the card. A busy motif stretching across the fold may look broken when stood up. A large central shape is often easier to read across a small room than many tiny pieces. If you choose cut-out paper accents, prefer broad pieces that cannot be mistaken for food and avoid detachable beads, sequins and glitter, especially where children or pets can reach the table.

2. Measure materials and prepare a clean workspace

For three designs, prepare at least **three sheets of sturdy but foldable card**, each big enough for a **180 x 130 mm** blank, plus extra for design changes. One original blank fits within both A4 (210 x 297 mm) and US Letter (216 x 279 mm) portrait sheets, leaving a theoretical left/right width margin of **15 mm per side** on A4 and **18 mm per side** on Letter when centred. These are paper geometry checks, not guarantees of printer compatibility. Verify the printable area and any printer cardstock restrictions. Use an ordinary sheet to transfer marks if your printer cannot feed thick card.

Have a ruler, pencil, suitable scissors or a paper trimmer, bone folder or blunt scoring implement, colored pencils or other suitable paper-safe drawing tools, and a clean flat work surface. Small quantities of paper-safe adhesive are optional only for broad, light paper accents: choose it by its actual label and allow it to cure as instructed. You can complete the entire project using pencils and without any glue. Do not use aerosol glue, hot glue, heat tools, flame, or solvent-containing craft coatings in this design.

Keep the work area dry and clear. Scissors and cutting tools remain under adult control; account for sharp tools before and after. Store small loose cutouts where children and animals cannot reach them. If the decorated area will be a dining table, designate a space away from food, hot drinks, spills, serving platters and places where guests will put their hands. There is no reason to add a flame to make the paper objects more attractive.

3. Make one consistent template

Print the supplied blank at **Actual size / 100%**, not Fit to Page. Before following any printed lines, measure the **50 mm calibration bar** with a real ruler; if it differs, do not use the printed outline as a true-size template. Instead measure the listed numbers directly onto card. The outline is a solid rectangle **180 mm horizontally x 130 mm vertically**. Its vertical centre line at **x = 90 mm** is the **fold**; it is not a cutting line. No seam allowance, tabs, or hidden glue flaps are required.

Cut only the outer solid rectangle. Transfer the centre fold to the card with two light tick marks at its top and bottom. With a suitable blunt tool, score *gently* from top to bottom along x = 90 mm if the cardstock tolerates it. Do not slice through the fold or scrape away the surface. Fold along the centre so the two **90 x 130 mm** panels meet with their decorated faces outward. Reopen slightly to create a free-standing tent. Repeat to create three blanks of matching dimensions.

When viewed from the side, each tent has two sloping panels of **90 mm**, not a rigid 90 mm height. For example, if you open a symmetrical tent to a footprint **100 mm** across, each half-footprint is 50 mm and the geometric apex height would be approximately **$\text{sqrt}(90^2 - 50^2) = \text{sqrt}(5600) = 74.8$ mm**. This is a theoretical relationship, not a promise that a paper fold will support a particular height or remain stable. You do not need to calculate the height to make the piece; use the number only to understand why different opening angles change its appearance.

4. Design three faces without making them identical

Scene A - First Shoot. On one panel, draw one curved stem that begins roughly one third of the way up from the bottom, with two broad oval leaves pointing in different directions. Use a thin dark line and one green accent. Keep the stem at least 12 mm from the top fold and 10 mm from the side edge. A short note such as 'a new beginning' may sit low on the undecorated back panel of the same card, but a caption is optional. The original companion motif page provides a simplified silhouette to study and adapt; it is not a plant-identification drawing.

Scene B - Falling Leaf. Draw three stylized leaf silhouettes, one high, one central and one low, each angled slightly differently. Repeat a single warm hue and let uncolored card remain between shapes. Leaves are abstract paper

graphics; they are not promises of particular real species. Avoid drying or attaching real foliage to this version: dried plant material can crumble or become damp and does not belong near meals, heat or children.

Scene C - Night Stars. Draw three large, simple five-point stars or hand-made dots spaced unevenly on a dark-blue painted or colored-paper field. Do not attach lights, metallic loose wiring or batteries to the card. The motif is a non-electrical drawing that can be safely stored flat when not used. If applying colored paper rather than drawing, select an ordinary craft adhesive whose exact instructions support the materials, keep pieces large, and allow complete drying before folding.

A useful composition method is to make a quick pencil thumbnail of each 90 x 130 mm panel before drawing or attaching anything. Check the amount of blank space and whether the motif has a clear visual centre. You are not required to cover both faces: one decorated side and one quietly colored back can make a coherent display.

5. Finish edges and allow materials to settle

Trim stray fibres from the card edges, then fold each piece with the printed design facing the intended direction. If the edges show pencil measuring marks, erase them carefully where the paper permits. Keep pressure light to avoid creasing the printed face. If you used any adhesive, leave each piece lying flat until the manufacturer's full drying or cure conditions are satisfied; folding a still-wet joint can wrinkle the card or make its sides stick together. Do not speed drying with a hairdryer or hotplate.

The construction does **not** need a weighted base, hidden metal clip, ribbon, candle, jar or taped-down wire. A tent card should sit on a clear, dry flat surface solely as a temporary, lightweight decoration. If it will not stand upright safely because of thin paper, uneven fold, airflow or attached weight, set it flat as a small place illustration or replace it with a more stable design. Do not use an undisclosed adhesive or a heavy improvised weight to force a wobbling card to stand.

6. Arrange the three pieces to fit the actual table

Each piece presents an approximately **130 mm** horizontal span. With three pieces in a row and a suggested **30 mm** gap between neighbors, the combined nominal run is **3 x 130 + 2 x 30 = 450 mm**. This leaves some breathing space between motifs. A suitable table display needs extra clearance beyond 450 mm for hands, tableware and movement. If the surface is smaller, use only one or two cards, or stagger them carefully without crowding the edges.

A paper tent opened to a 100 mm front-to-back footprint needs roughly that much depth, again plus clearance for reaching and cleaning. These figures describe a design layout, **not a tipping or stability rating**. Keep cards away from vents, active fans, window drafts, frequently opened doors and any area where they may be knocked into a hot object. Arrange the low motif first, the visually tallest focal motif second, and the spare design last; then choose the order that looks best at the viewing distance.

A seasonal table decoration is most useful when people can still use the table. If the group needs to serve a meal, move the paper pieces to a nearby shelf rather than placing them beside plates, hot dishes or drinks. A decorative project is not improved by making ordinary activities less safe.

7. Establish a firm fire and child-safety boundary

Do **not** place a real candle beside or inside any part of this paper decoration. Paper, fabric, ribbons and dry leaves are combustible; a centered paper card does not make a flame safe. The U.S. Fire Administration advises keeping real candles at least **12 inches / about 30 cm** from anything that can burn and using stable candle holders, while recommending flameless alternatives [1]. The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs likewise advises moving decorations away from flames and preferring flameless seasonal displays [2]. This project uses **no candle at all** even if the wider room contains approved lights; place it away from warm bulbs, heaters, fireplaces, burner flames and other heat sources.

The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs also highlights the hazards of decorations with small detachable parts around children [3]. Do not put loose paper cutouts, small clips, sharp picks, glitter, beads or candy-looking pieces where children or pets might swallow them. Leave fragile ornaments out of the display instead of hiding them behind larger paper designs.

The paper decoration must never be used as a shade over a lamp, an electrical fixture, a candle surround or a holder for food or hot beverages. Nothing in the design has been flame tested or certified. If such a purpose is required, purchase a product designed and rated specifically for that application.

8. Troubleshoot common mistakes

The printout measures incorrectly. Verify the 50 mm ruler bar, remove any automatic scaling and try the correct portrait paper option. If the printer still changes scale, measure the 180 x 130 mm rectangle with a ruler on suitable card.

The folded card wobbles. Look for uneven leg lengths, an off-centre score, warped card or unequal opening. Recheck the 90 mm midpoint and use a dry, level surface. If it remains unreliable, display the illustration flat rather than making a risky holder from it.

The motif looks crowded. Compare the sketch with the available 90 x 130 mm face; reduce the number or size of shapes. Blank paper is intentional in these compositions.

The paper curls after gluing. You may have used too much liquid adhesive or incompatible card. Let it dry completely and consider a less wet application or a drawing-only design on a new blank. Do not heat an unidentified adhesive to straighten it.

The pieces get in the way of dinner. Move them. A project can be successful as a shelf accent even when the table is not a suitable display surface.

A leaf or other small component detaches. Keep it out of reach of children and pets, and simplify the artwork. Avoid repeatedly attaching small loose items to a decorative object that is frequently handled.

9. A reusable seasonal design and placement record

Record the event or season, selected color palette, paper weight or product, rectangle dimensions, fold midpoint, whether the 50 mm check bar matched the ruler, which motif belongs on each piece, whether any adhesive fully cured, the actual display location and clearance from heat/food/children, and the final decision **DISPLAY / MOVE / KEEP FLAT**. The companion sheet includes a sketch window for each of the three motifs and a row for each placement condition. A reader may complete this design framework digitally or on paper without making a physical object.

To reuse the idea, leave the measured blank unchanged and make three new seasonal drawings on fresh card. Do not claim that the original paper pieces are waterproof, washable or permanent. Store them flat in a dry folder away from sunlight and crushing weight. This is a creative design technique, not an archival preservation system.

Sources and original-design boundary

[1] U.S. Fire Administration, *Holiday Fire Safety* and *Candle Fire Safety*: candle clearance, stable holders and the option of flameless candles. No candle is included in this project.

Open cited source

Open cited source

[2] Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, *Holiday Fire Safety Tips*: keep flammable decorations away from lit candles and heat sources.

Open cited source

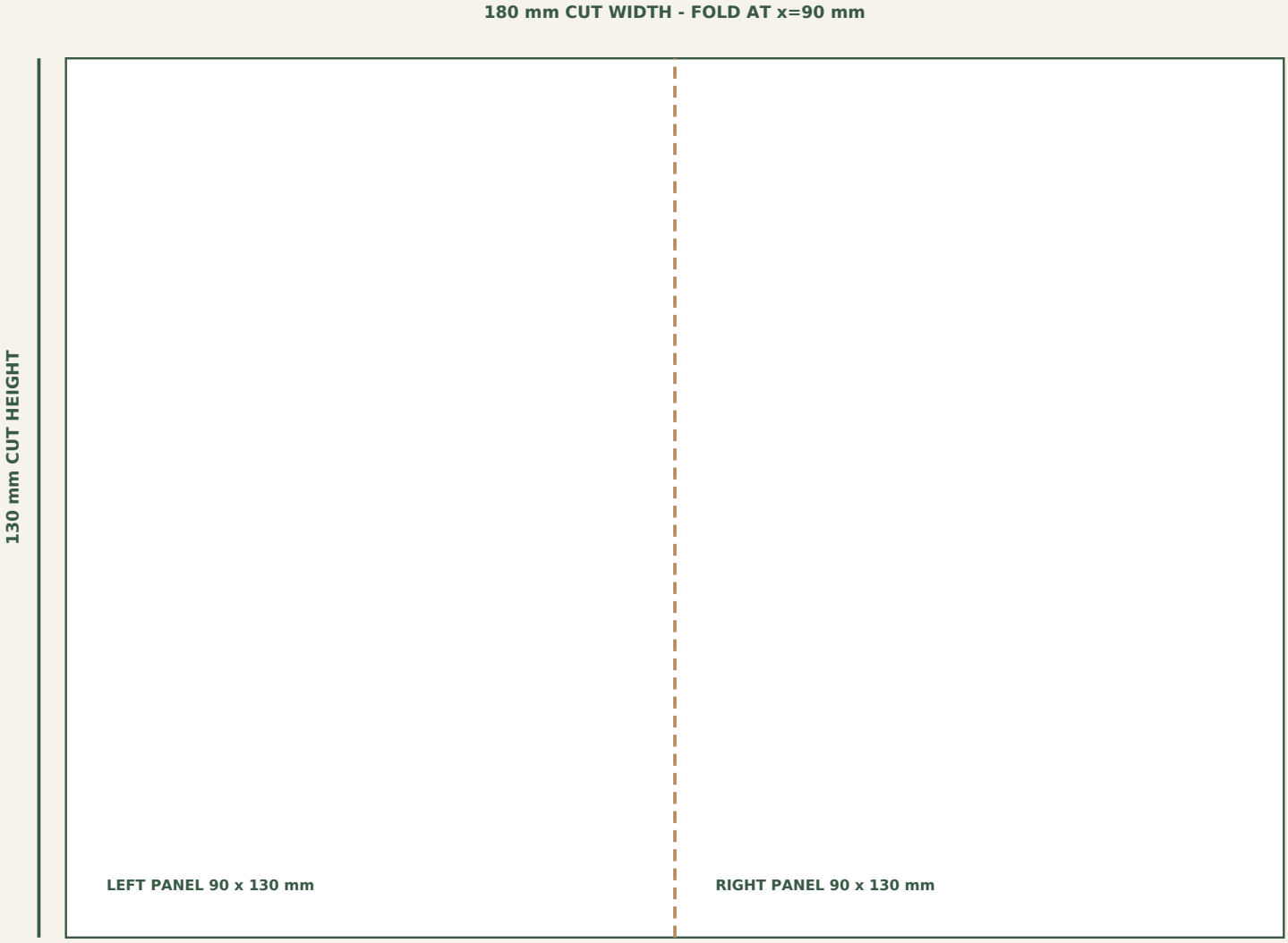
[3] Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, *Winter Holiday Safety*: care with decorations that contain sharp or small detachable components around children.

Open cited source

The original 180 x 130 mm tent card, geometric layout, seasonal motifs, worksheets, illustrations and text are created for Steadleaf Press. References establish general safety boundaries; they do not endorse the new templates or prove performance. All sizes are calculated design dimensions. **No publisher physical folding, assembly, balance, flammability or product-longevity tests were performed**, and none is claimed or required.

Full-size foldable seasonal tent

PRINT 100% - solid edge = CUT; dashed centre = FOLD

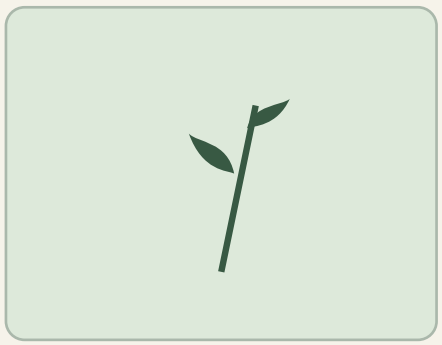


50 mm calibration bar; measure with a ruler after printing

One full-size blank per sheet. Print THREE copies or measure directly on cardstock.

Three original seasonal motifs

Design studies - draw directly onto your own folded card



A. FIRST SHOOT



B. FALLING LEAF



C. NIGHT STARS

Display plan: 3 x 130 mm panels + two 30 mm gaps = 450 mm row.

Event or season / color palette:

Card blanks: 3 x 180 x 130 mm / fold at 90 mm:

Printed 50 mm calibration bar checked? (Yes / No):

A = First Shoot: chosen color and notes:

B = Falling Leaf: chosen color and notes:

C = Night Stars: chosen color and notes:

Adhesive, if used: exact product / fully cured:

No flame, heat, food, toddler or pet exposure:

Dry flat surface / away from vents and draft:

DISPLAY / MOVE / KEEP FLAT - decision:

Original paper decoration. No electrical parts, candles or physical stability certification.