Low-Cost Hanging Lamps

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It is both fashionable and practical to use lamps that hang from the ceiling instead of floor and table lamps. Hanging lamps cannot be knocked over accidentally. They can be placed wherever needed over chairs, tables, and desks without problems of an electric cord lying on the floor. This is especially important when furniture is placed away from a wall.

Lightweight lamps can be hung by the electric cord. Heavier fixtures use chain intertwined with the electric cord. CAUTION: hanging lamps need to be checked to be sure the light bulb does not touch the sides, and nothing should interfere with the flow of air up through the lamp, which carries away the heat. Plastic does not flame, but will melt if the bulb touches it or the heat builds up.

Purchase enough electric cord to run from the wall outlet up the wall, over to the desired position, and down to the bulb socket. Various colors of cord are available. If desired, a small thumb switch can be inserted in the cord at a convenient height. Otherwise, the lamp will have to be plugged in and out of the wall socket. Two cup hooks can be used on the ceiling.

Directions are given for a five-carton and a six-carton lamp made from either plastic or cardboard egg cartons. The method of attaching the lamp shade to the electric equipment is different for the two sizes of lamps. A lamp made from plastic drinking cups provides another possibility that has a Danish-modern appearance. Plastic cannot be painted satisfactorily, so the color of plastic egg cartons should be chosen to fit the room decor. Using throw-away items helps prevent pollution by recycling materials.

Egg Carton Lamps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials Needed</th>
<th>Equipment Needed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 or 6 egg cartons</td>
<td>Scissors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 wire coat hanger (lightweight), or corrugated cardboard 3¾” x 8”</td>
<td>Snap clothespins or paper clips</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 wire “twist-ems” (from food wrappers)</td>
<td>Pliers</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 strips lightweight cardboard</td>
<td>Nail (for punching holes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flameproof crepe paper or fabric*</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 strips lightweight cardboard</td>
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<td>Decorative ribbon, if desired</td>
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<td>White glue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electric light bulb, socket, cord, plug, and switch</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 cup hooks</td>
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Cut off all but about an inch of the lid of each carton. The strip of the lid left should be the same width as the hinged flap on the other side. The little “knobs” on the hinged flap must be cut out, so the strips can be glued together. Line up the five cartons side by side, with the flaps against each other like seams in a dress. Glue them together, using snap clothespins or paper clips to hold the flaps together until dry. For the five-carton version, punch a hole through each set of glued flaps, about ⅛ inch from the end. Omit the holes for the six-carton lamp.

For the five-carton lamp, use a wire coat hanger. Cut off the hook with pliers and straighten out the wire. Cut off two 7-inch pieces. Bend ½ inch at a right angle at each end of each piece. Put the two pieces together with two of the wire “twist-ems” as shown in the drawing.

Bend the long piece of wire into a circle about 6 inches in diameter. Thread the wire through the holes previously punched in the flaps at one end of the egg cartons. Be sure the glue has dried, since the clothespins or paper clips will need to be removed. The wire will draw the cartons into a circle. There is no need to fasten the ends of wire together. Put glue on the end flaps, press them together and clip them securely on the inside of the lamp until the glue is dry.

For the six-carton version, omit the wire and simply cut a piece of corrugated cardboard into a

* Soak old sheet or pillowcase fabric in a solution of two cups boiling water, two tablespoons borax, and one tablespoon boric acid. Dry and press.
true rectangle that is 3½” x 8½”. Make an X with a pencil from corner to corner, then make a cut from the middle of one long side into the center. The electric cord will slide in here. The cardboard will slip into the lamp under the top rim when the sides are squeezed together.

Make the light diffuser with the flameproof crepe paper or fabric and strips of lightweight cardboard. The diffuser softens the light shining through the sides of the lamp. If a 60-watt bulb is used, the crepe paper may be used. For larger bulbs, use the fabric, since heat darkens the crepe paper. Bend the cardboard into circles that will fit inside the lamp, one at the top of the flaps just under the wire, and the other at the bottom of the flaps. Glue the cardboard ends together, using a clip to hold them together until dry. Cut the crepe paper or fabric into a strip as wide as the length of the egg carton flaps. This strip will need to be long enough to go around the cardboard circles one, two, or three times, depending on how much the light needs to be softened. This can be tested before the diffuser is completed. Glue the crepe paper or fabric around the cardboard strips to make a cylinder like the picture below. Punch two holes through the cardboard at the top on opposite sides.

Insert the diffuser inside the lamp. Put the wire crosspiece in place so each end is above the holes punched in the cardboard of the diffuser. Use one wire “twist-em” at each side to secure the wire crosspiece, with an end of the “twist-em” left long enough to go through the holes in the diffuser. Leave the “twist-em” loose enough so the wire crosspiece can be moved along the wire circle. When the lamp is hung, the crosspiece may need to be moved to make the lamp hang straight. With the six-carton lamp, punch a hole at either end of the corrugated cardboard and attach the diffuser with the “twist-ems.”

The plug end of the electric cord can be slipped between the crosspiece wires, so the bulb socket with light bulb can be pulled up inside the lamp. Use a wire “twist-em” to wrap around the cord and the crosspiece to hold the cord in the center of the lamp, with the bulb socket as close as possible to the crosspiece. The lamp is now ready to be hung. The switch can be attached after the lamp is in place, so the most convenient spot can be chosen. Just be sure to unplug the lamp before attaching the switch.

**Polyfoam Coffee Cup Lamp**

**Materials Needed**

- 40 polyfoam cups
- White glue
- Wire “twist-ems” (from food wrappers)
- Wire coat hanger (lightweight)
- Lightweight cardboard, big enough for two 11-inch-diameter circles
- Flameproof white crepe paper or fabric
- Electric light bulb, socket, cord, plug, and switch
- 2 cup hooks

**Equipment Needed**

- Pencil
- Scissors
- Cellophane tape
- String
- Pliers

Glue the cups together as shown in the picture, to make ten stacks of four cups each. Draw two circles on the cardboard, using a dinner-size plate. When dry, place the stacks on one of the cardboard circles. Arrange in as true a circle as possible, then hold the cups together at the top with short pieces of cellophane tape. Tie string around the middle of the lamp, then flip the lamp over. Put cellophane tape between the cups on this end.

Put the bottom end of the lamp on one of the cardboard circles, with the white side down. Draw around the outside of the cups. If desired, also draw around the inside of the cups (or cut a circle in the center, if preferred). Put a pencil mark on the edge of one cup and, at the same spot, on the cardboard, so the cardboard can be put in place after cutting. Glue the cardboard to the cups.

Now place the lamp upside down on the other cardboard circle, with the white side of the cardboard facing down. Draw around the outside of the cups. Cut the cardboard around this line. Make a four-inch-diameter circle in the middle and cut out. Cut a slit on opposite sides of the edge of this inner circle, placing the slits ½ inch in from the edge. Each slit should follow the curve of the circle and be about one inch long. Glue the cardboard to the cups. This is the top of the lamp.

Cut two pieces from the wire coat hanger and make into a crosspiece as described in the directions for the egg carton lamp. Also make a diffuser from the crepe paper or fabric. Place inside the
lamp and attach at the top with the wire “twist-ems.” The crosspiece can be moved around to level the lamp, if the “twist-ems” are not too tightly secured through the slits at each side.

Make five stacks of each design above. Use white glue.

Other Lamp Materials

Tall juice cans can be easily made into hanging lamps that give a strong down-light. The outside can be painted as desired. A cluster of three lamps hung at varying heights can be used over a dining table. This lamp can be hung as a spotlight over pictures or plants.

Discarded wire frames for lampshades can be covered with fabric or paper and used as hanging lamps. Fabric can be gathered on elastic at top and bottom for an easy covering that can be taken off and washed.