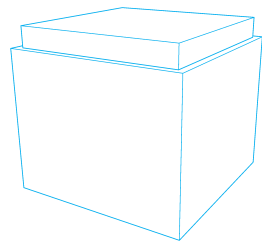
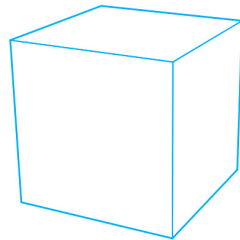


foam cubes

Standard cube
16"

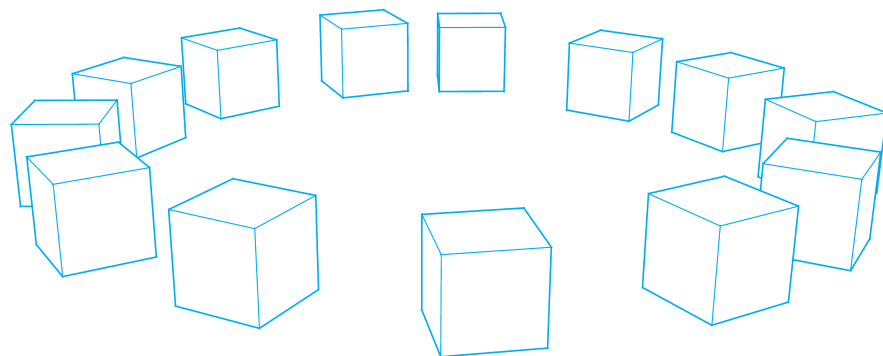


Sleeve
dimensions:
17" x 17" x 15"

Sleeved cube
dimensions:
15" x 15" x 17"

3/4" plywood

Seating comfort:
25 minutes



sketches: Scott Witthoft

Foam cubes are solid & light, and compact & stackable. They represent an abstract shape, easily adapted to imaginative uses. They can be used equally well for low seating during short conversations as for simulating elements of 3-D space at scale.*

What would it be like to make a wall here? Build it! We've seen the cubes configured into beds, a dark, enclosed room to simulate a "blind man's house," and a cube "castle," setting the stage for brainstorming on the topic of security.

The cubes are plain, which seems to be a key to their successful implementation. Their lack of ornamentation has been critically important to their use as abstract "building blocks." We've tried many different colors and shapes of cubes, and the best choice always seems to be gray.

Cubes are comfortable seats for about 25 minutes, so keep this in mind!

We've built another option, the Sleeved Cube, that adds a new dimension and makes a more comfortable seat. The plywood sleeve on this cube confines the foam and makes it comfortable for a longer period. Sleeved Cubes can also be flipped on their sides to create firm seating and different stacking surfaces.

The d.school uses approximately 150 cubes for a 50-student class; 20 cubes is a good starting quantity.

what to buy

We've looked at two criteria in sourcing foam—the density and the indentation force deflection (IFD). The gut-feeling translation of these criteria from someone picking up or sitting on a cube might be weight and stiffness. A good range for density is from 2.0 to 4.0; less than 2.0 might feel too light; greater than 4.0 might feel too heavy. A good range for IFD is 70 to 90; less than 70 is often too squishy or soft; greater than 90 is too stiff or rigid. The density of the cubes we have used most recently is 2.0 and their IFD is 70.

sourcing

Bob's Foam Factory (4055 Pestana Place, Fremont, CA 94538; 510 657-2420; www.bobsfoam.com)

Foamorder (1325 Howard Street, San Francisco, CA 94103; 415 503-1188; www.foamorder.com)

Foam 'n More (1925 West Maple Road, Troy, MI 48084; www.foamforyou.com)

*Special thanks to the IDEO Boston office for lending us our first set of cubes.

start

Have some milk crates or sturdy cardboard boxes lying around? Set up a prominent stack for general use and see what happens. Use some of them as informal seating for your next meeting. (Note: If you use boxes, they might need internal supports to function as sturdy seats.)

see also

32

Situations_Around the Campfire

68

Tools_Flip Stool