



# MESA DAY CONTEST RULES

## 2024-2025

(FINAL)

### Moon Base

LEVEL:	Middle School (MS)
DIVISION(S):	Grades 6 and Grades 7/8
COMPOSITION OF TEAM:	2-3 students per team
NUMBER OF TEAMS:	Preliminary – Determined by your local MESA center Regional – # of teams per division at the discretion of each region (Northern/Central, LA/Central Coast, and Southern)
SPONSORS:	California State University, Long Beach MESA College Prep Center University of California, Los Angeles MESA College Prep Center

**OVERVIEW:** Changes, if any, from “DRAFT” rules are highlighted in “yellow.” In the future, space agencies from many nations are planning to return to the moon with plans to establish permanent research stations. As is obvious from the many craters on the moon visible from the Earth, meteor strikes are a relatively common occurrence with devastating results. Your task is to design a structure to house these new moon-based research activities with a safe zone for your astronaut. Students will design and construct an original structure using only recycled cardboard that can withstand the highest amount of impact, is lightweight, and meets the specific size requirements outlined below. **Participation logistics, limits, and competition facilities may vary by host site. Advisors and students are responsible for verifying this information with their local MESA center.** Students should take into consideration the transportation of projects; competition-ready projects must be transported safely to the competition site.

**LAB REPORT:** An **engineering lab report** is a required component of this competition that is meant to clearly demonstrate and illustrate evidence of the application of the Engineering Design Process in the MESA project. The purpose of the Engineering Lab Report is for students to better understand the process an engineer goes through in the creation of a project. MESA projects are not designed to be completed in a single class period or day, but to be the result of thoughtful research, planning, analysis, and evaluation. Keeping a lab report throughout the design process will help to keep a designer on track, using a logical progression of planning, in order to develop their project efficiently.

For the Engineering Lab Report, **electronic submission will be required.** Teams should use an electronic portal/application such as Google Docs to keep and

maintain a lab report. Access and permission to the lab report must then be given to MESA Day staff and judges OR lab report is submitted electronically (e.g., PDF file, WORD file) for review. **Please check with your local MESA center for the deadline and submission platform to submit your team's lab report for local and for regional events.** See "MESA Day 24-25 Engineering Lab Report Guidelines" at <https://mesa.ucop.edu/>.

### MATERIALS:

For the structure, the only allowable material is deconstructed, post-consumer, not plastic coated, unpainted cardboard without seams with up to a maximum 5mm thickness.

- No other materials are allowed

The Host Center will provide the following during the competitions:

- Safety Goggles
- Scale for weighing the structures
- The Impact Testing Device for testing
- An empty 12-ounce standard soda can (with a height of 12.1 cm) for the Astronaut
- Paint (fingerpaint, bright colored, glow-in-the-dark, etc.)
- Step Stool
- Surface to protect the integrity of the floor (gym mats, yoga mats, etc.)
- [Square Guide for centering "astronaut"](#) (24 inch x 24 inch printout)
- Floor

### GENERAL RULES:

- 1) The students' full name, grade level, school name, and MESA center must be clearly labeled on the structure. A 10% penalty in the score will be assessed for failing to properly label. Once the structure has been checked in, changes and alterations are not allowed.
- 2) Only recycled, deconstructed, post-consumer, not plastic coated, unpainted cardboard without seams (e.g. teams cannot submit a post-consumer box as is) with up to a maximum 5mm thickness can be used to create the structure (polymers, wood, metal, ceramics, etc. are not allowed). Students are NOT allowed to create glued connections or laminates on the existing cardboard **or mix substances (e.g., water) with the cardboard**; however, cardboard can be layered.
  - a) After the project has been tested, there will be a forensic inspection to ensure no additional materials are used on the internal structure and no individual piece of cardboard is thicker than 5mm.
- 3) All joints or connections must be created with allowed materials; no glue, tape, or other external adhesive of any type can be used in any way or form. Carved, mortise, tenon, or other systems using exclusively cardboard are allowed.
- 4) The structure (including all parts - joints, connectors, etc.) MUST fit the following specifications. Note that the shapes and geometry of the Moon Base are up to the teams to determine as long as they meet the specifications (See Figure 1):
  - a) Maximum linear length = 55 cm
  - b) Maximum linear width = 55 cm
  - c) Maximum linear height = 25 cm
  - d) Minimum interior clearance = must fit a 20 cm radius half sphere in the center.
  - e) Maximum Structure Weight = 800 grams

- 5) Structure must be **fully enclosed**, except the following:
  - a) The entire structure must NOT have a base/floor.
  - b) The structure must ONLY have two openings, to allow the “astronaut” to be seen by the audience and to allow the inspection of the structure. The two openings can be of any shape with a MINIMUM dimension of 10 cm across and 10 cm in height and a MAXIMUM 20 cm across and 10 cm in height.
- 6) No material (e.g., paint, varnish, hairspray, etc.) may be applied to the structure, **with the exception of the ink or pencil used to identify students’ full name, grade level, school, and MESA center.** Any tape that is on the post-consumer cardboard must be removed (e.g., tape on an Amazon box). **Pre-existing markings and printings from manufacturing are acceptable (see Attachment A: Cardboard Examples)**
- 7) Please remember that the purpose of this contest is to use creativity to build the best structure within the framework of the rules. The purpose is not to break the rules and see if you can get away with it.
- 8) The structure and lab report must be the original work of the students. **Judges may ask questions to confirm provenance.**
- 9) Digital media (e.g., photos, video recordings, etc.) will not be accepted for judging purposes. **All judging decisions are final.**

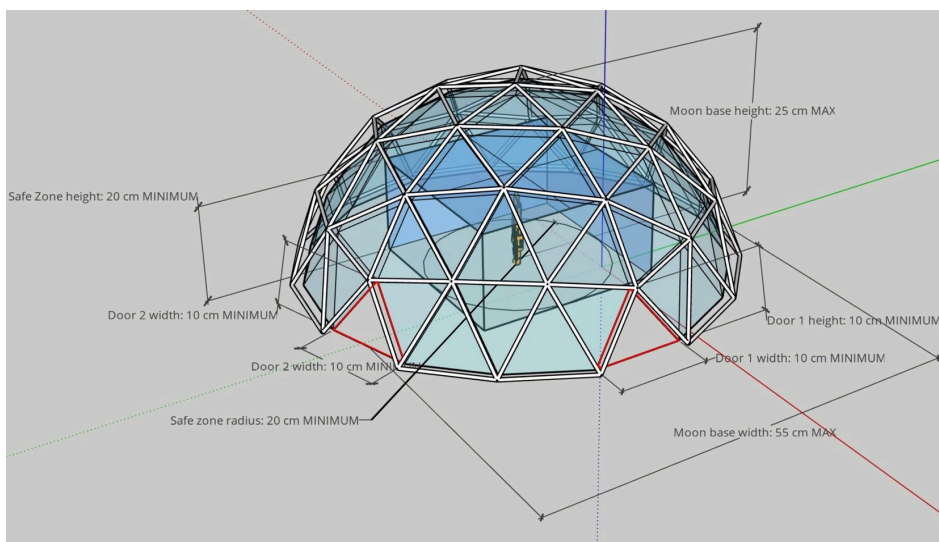
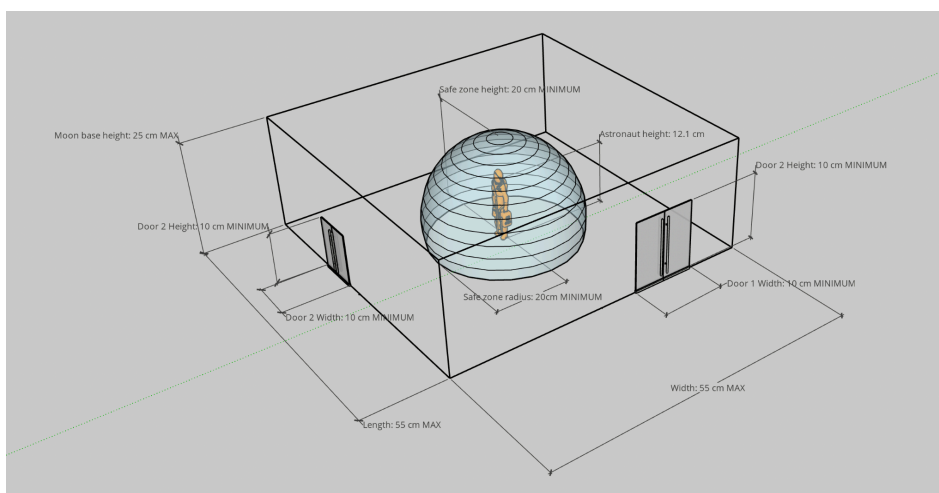


Fig 1. Clearances and dimensional specifications for space to fit the structure. These diagrams are a representation to show the MINIMUM interior dimensions of structures for the safe zone and MAXIMUM exterior dimensions of the Moon Base. Please note that the interior and exterior shape and placement of the openings of the Moon Base is to be determined by teams within the minimum and maximum requirements.



Figures were created by Alan Fera, Student Assistant with the UC Santa Barbara MESA Center.

**JUDGING:**

- 1) Prior to load testing, the structure receives a specification check to determine whether it conforms to the weight, dimension, and construction rules. See Figure 2 below for a sample internal measuring device.
- 2) The competing structure is weighed and its mass “ $m_s$ ” is recorded in grams.
- 3) The structure will be centered on a flat, sound surface under the impact testing device (see **Attachment B** for details). A “crash test dummy astronaut” (i.e., an empty 12 ounce standard soda can) with a height of 12.1 cm will be centered in the interior space. After each test, the Moon Base and astronaut must be re-centered below the testing device.
  - a) In setting up the competition, place [the square guide](#) on the ground to denote the center. Teams are responsible for placing their device as close to the center as possible.
- 4) A load with a mass “ $m_l$ ” (in grams) will impact the structure, starting at an elevation of 50 cm, measured from the flat surface where both the structure and testing device are standing. After the impact, the judges will verify if the structure touched the astronaut's body (i.e., the empty 12 oz standard soda can). The hitch ball (see **Attachment C: Testing Device Construction Materials**), used as the load, will need to be weighed (“ $m_l$ ”) prior to testing.
  - a) The Host Center will provide a 12.1 cm tall “astronaut” made of an empty 12 ounce standard soda can. A drop of bright-colored paint will be placed on the top of the “astronaut's head” to see if the structure hit the astronaut.
  - b) A new can should be used for each team unless the can used in the previous trial was not touched by the Moon Base.
- 5) If the structure or impact weight/hitch ball did not touch the astronaut, the height of the impact will be increased by increments of 25 cm up to 200 cm (i.e., 75 cm, 100 cm, 125 cm, 150 cm, 175 cm and 200 cm). The impact height “H” (in cm) is the highest measured impact height that still protects the astronaut; the highest measured impact height is recorded.
  - a) A structure that does not protect the astronaut at its initial impact height of 50 cm will be disqualified.
- 6) Disqualified structures are not eligible to place. However, they may be tested in private, time permitting.

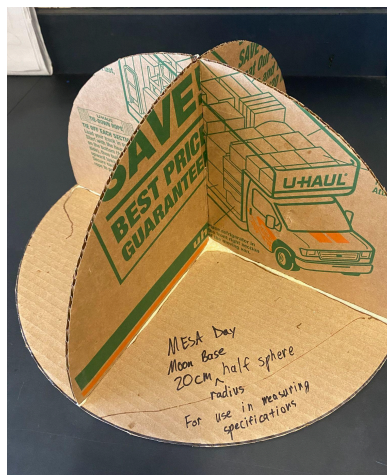


Fig 2. Sample internal measurement tool.

The safe zone tester was created by Julian Peña, Lead Judge with the San Jose State University MESA Center.

**SCORING:**

- 1) The structures will be scored by their Impact-to-Mass Ratio, “I/M” calculated as:

$$I/M = m_i * g * (H * 10^{-2}) / m_s$$

Where:  $m_i$  is the mass of the hitch ball in grams;  $g$  is the gravity,  $9.81 \text{ m/s}^2$ ;  $H$  is highest impact elevation in centimeters; and  $m_s$  is the mass of the competing structure in grams.

- 2) **Performance Points**

- a) Winning Performance ( $P_w$ ) = team with the highest Impact-to-Mass Ratio from all teams in the same Division/Grade Level (receives 75 points)
  - b) Team Performance ( $P_t$ ) = team’s Impact-to-Mass Ratio
  - c) Team Performance Ratio =  $P_t$  divided by  $P_w$
  - d) **Team Performance Points =  $P_t / P_w \times 75$**
- 3) Final Team Score = (Team Performance Points - Penalties) + Engineering Lab Report Points

**AWARDS:**

- Teams who do not submit an Engineering Lab Report will NOT be eligible for any awards.
- Awards will be given per division: Grade 6 and Grades 7/8 (MS).
- Medals will be awarded for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place based on the best Impact-to-Mass Ratio.
- Ribbons will be awarded for Innovative Engineering Design.
- Only teams that place in the Impact-to-Mass Ratio category will advance to Regional MESA Day; please check with your local MESA center to determine the number of teams that advance to Regional MESA Day.

**ATTACHMENTS/APPENDIX:**

- **A: Cardboard Examples**
- **B: Impact Testing Device**
- **C: Testing Device Construction Materials**
- **D: Inspection and Score Sheet for Moon Base**



**A: CARDBOARD EXAMPLES**

Below are a few examples of commonly used cardboard.

**1) ACCEPTABLE:**

- a. Pre-existing markings and printings from manufacturing (i.e. amazon, home depot, USPS, etc.)



**2) NOT ACCEPTABLE:**

- a. Paperboard lined cardboard



- b. Cardboard with tape or sticker labels (any tape that is on the post-consumer cardboard must be removed before using)



**B: IMPACT TESTING DEVICE**

This device has been designed in such a way that it can be safely built by the MESA students with teacher supervision. All materials are standard and can be found at the local hardware store. A tutorial video on how to build the testing device can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXwbVM1Jupg>

1) Materials (Note that the tester can be built using PVC pipe, but ABS is more impact resistant, easier to cut and glue, and is a more sustainable product):

ID	Qty	Item
(a)	2	2 inch ABS pipes (10 ft standard length)
(b)	2	2 inch ABS 90 degree Tee (NIBCO 2 in. ABS DWV All Hub Sanitary Tee)
(c)	2	2 inch ABS 90 degree short elbow (NIBCO 2 in. ABS DWV 90° Hub x Hub Vent Elbow)
(d)	1	2 inch ABS double Tee (NIBCO 2 in. ABS DWV All Hub Double Sanitary Tee)
(e)	4	2 inch ABS caps (NIBCO 2 in. ABS DWV Hub Cap)
(f)	1	ABS glue
(g)	1	Impact Weight
(h)	1	Pin or screwdriver
(i)	1	Rope

2) Tools: hand saw, drill, sandpaper (or file), small level, step stool

3) Construction process:

- I. Cut eight 25 cm long pieces of 2 inch ABS pipe. Finish watch cut with the sandpaper or file.
- II. Build the apparatus feet (2 units) first by gluing two collinear pieces of ABS pipe (Item a) to the Tee. (Item b)
- III. Build the horizontal beam of the apparatus by gluing two pieces of pipe (Item a) to the double Tee (Item d)
- IV. Create the apparatus two columns by gluing one side of the 90 short elbows (Item c) to a piece of ABS pipe (Item a).
- V. Create the apparatus frame by gluing the horizontal beam created in step (III) to the feet created in step (IV). Place this assembly on a flat surface and make sure all pipes are on the same horizontal plane.
- VI. Install the apparatus feet from step (II) to the frame from step (V). Apply glue to the column in the frame and slowly slide each column into the tee at each apparatus foot. Always keep a level on top of the frame to ensure the beam on the frame is horizontal. (see Figure 2).
- VII. Install the caps (Item e) at the ends of each apparatus foot.



Fig 2. Installation of the apparatus feet.

- VIII. Cut the 2 inch pipe (Item a) at 7 feet and mount it on top of the double tee (Item d) at the center of the apparatus. Measure and mark this vertical pipe at an elevation of 50 cm measured from the horizontal surface where the apparatus is standing. Continue measuring and marking the pipe at 25 cm increments until reaching a final mark at an elevation equal to 200 cm.



**C: TESTING DEVICE CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS**

Product	Quantity	Unit Price	Links for Purchase (these are only suggestions - you can purchase these items from other vendors)
4 oz. Medium Black ABS Cement	1	4.97	<a href="https://www.homedepot.com/p/Oatey-4-oz-Medium-Black-ABS-Cement-309993/100136815">https://www.homedepot.com/p/Oatey-4-oz-Medium-Black-ABS-Cement-309993/100136815</a>
2 in ABS pipe (10 ft standard length)	2	12.98	<a href="https://www.homedepot.com/p/VPC-2-in-x-10-ft-ABS-Cell-Core-Pipe-29-210HD/309282467">https://www.homedepot.com/p/VPC-2-in-x-10-ft-ABS-Cell-Core-Pipe-29-210HD/309282467</a>
2 in. ABS DWV All Hub Sanitary Tee	2	3.96	<a href="https://www.homedepot.com/p/Charlotte-Pipe-2-in-ABS-DWV-San-Tee-ABS004000800HD/313834693">https://www.homedepot.com/p/Charlotte-Pipe-2-in-ABS-DWV-San-Tee-ABS004000800HD/313834693</a>
2 in. ABS DWV All Hub Double Sanitary Tee	1	10.46	<a href="https://www.homedepot.com/p/NIBCO-2-in-ABS-DWV-All-Hub-Double-Sanitary-Tee-C5835HD2/100347018">https://www.homedepot.com/p/NIBCO-2-in-ABS-DWV-All-Hub-Double-Sanitary-Tee-C5835HD2/100347018</a>
2 in. ABS DWV 90-Degree Hub x Hub Vent Elbow	2	3.74	<a href="https://www.homedepot.com/p/NIBCO-2-in-ABS-DWV-90-Degree-Hub-x-Hub-Vent-Elbow-C5807VHD2/100344401">https://www.homedepot.com/p/NIBCO-2-in-ABS-DWV-90-Degree-Hub-x-Hub-Vent-Elbow-C5807VHD2/100344401</a>
2 in. ABS DWV Cap	4	5.96	<a href="https://www.homedepot.com/p/NIBCO-2-in-ABS-DWV-Cap-C5817HD2/204697207">https://www.homedepot.com/p/NIBCO-2-in-ABS-DWV-Cap-C5817HD2/204697207</a>
5/32 in. x 75 ft. Camouflage Diamond Braid Polypropylene Rope with Winder	1	4.96	<a href="https://www.homedepot.com/p/Everbilt-5-32-in-x-75-ft-Camouflage-Diamond-Braid-Polypropylene-Rope-with-Winder-72575/206094286">https://www.homedepot.com/p/Everbilt-5-32-in-x-75-ft-Camouflage-Diamond-Braid-Polypropylene-Rope-with-Winder-72575/206094286</a>
2,000 lb. 1 7/8 in. Ball Diameter, 3/4 in. Shank Diameter, 2 3/8 in. Shank Length Chrome Class III Trailer Hitch Ball	1	8.98	<a href="https://www.homedepot.com/p/TowSmart-Class-1-2-000-lb-1-7-8-in-Ball-Diameter-3-4-in-Shank-Diameter-2-3-8-in-Shank-Length-Chrome-Trailer-Hitch-Ball-717/206798800">https://www.homedepot.com/p/TowSmart-Class-1-2-000-lb-1-7-8-in-Ball-Diameter-3-4-in-Shank-Diameter-2-3-8-in-Shank-Length-Chrome-Trailer-Hitch-Ball-717/206798800</a>
10 in. Hack Saw with Plastic Handle	1	5.97	<a href="https://www.homedepot.com/p/Anvil-10-in-Hack-Saw-with-Plastic-Handle-12750/303858480">https://www.homedepot.com/p/Anvil-10-in-Hack-Saw-with-Plastic-Handle-12750/303858480</a>
Pro Grade Precision 3-2/3 in. x 9 in. Faster Sanding Sheets 60 Grit Coarse (6-Pack)	1	4.97	<a href="https://www.homedepot.com/p/3M-Pro-Grade-Precision-3-2-3-in-x-9-in-Faster-Sanding-Sheets-60-Grit-Coarse-6-Pack-127060PGP-6/313353720">https://www.homedepot.com/p/3M-Pro-Grade-Precision-3-2-3-in-x-9-in-Faster-Sanding-Sheets-60-Grit-Coarse-6-Pack-127060PGP-6/313353720</a>
9 in. Torpedo Level	1	4.97	<a href="https://www.homedepot.com/p/Empire-9-in-Torpedo-Level-587-24/100653523">https://www.homedepot.com/p/Empire-9-in-Torpedo-Level-587-24/100653523</a>

Note: It will be necessary to drill holes and have a pin to release the hitch ball.

**D: INSPECTION AND SCORE SHEET FOR MOON BASE**  
**Middle School – Grades 6 and Grades 7/8**

Student Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: 6 or 7/8 (circle one)

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Center: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>INSPECTION LIST:</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Only recycled, deconstructed, post-consumer, not plastic coated, unpainted cardboard is used.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No glue, tape, or other external adhesive of any type is used.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Width of individual cardboard pieces is no thicker than 5mm.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maximum linear length of the structure is not greater than 55cm.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maximum linear width of the structure is not greater than 55cm.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maximum linear height of the structure is not greater than 25cm.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Minimum interior clearance has a minimum of a 20cm clearance.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maximum structure weight is 800g.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Structure has two openings with a min of 10cmx10cm and max of 20cmx10cm (any shape).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The structure does not have a base/floor.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moon Base is labeled properly (students' full name, grade, school name, and MESA center).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Testing Results</b>				
$I/M = m_1 * g * (H * 10^{-2}) / m_s$ Where: $m_1$ is the mass of the hitch ball in grams; $g$ is the gravity, $9.81 \text{ m/s}^2$ ; $H$ is highest impact elevation in centimeters; and $m_s$ is the mass of the competing structure in grams.				
Mass of the Hitch Ball (in grams)	Multiplied by 9.81 (force of gravity)	Final Height multiplied by $10^{-2}$	Multiply the result in column 2 to the result in column 3	Divided by the weight of the Moon Base (in grams)
Example: 1154g	Example: $1154\text{g} \times 9.81\text{m/s}^2 =$ 11,320.74	Example: $125\text{cm} \times 10^{-2} =$ 1.25m	Example: $11,320.74 \times 1.25\text{m} =$ 14,150.925	Example: Structure weight 231g $14,150.95/231\text{g} = 61.26$

<b>Final Team Score</b>	
Team's I/M	
Highest I/M (from all teams in the same Division/Grade Level)	
Performance Ratio (Team I/M Score ÷ Best I/M Score)	
Performance Points (Performance Ratio x 75)	
Moon Base Labeling Penalty (10%)	-
Engineering Lab Report Points	+
<b>Final Team Score</b>	

**Engineering Lab Report Submitted:**    Yes    No

*Teams who do not submit an Engineering Lab Report will NOT be eligible for any awards.*