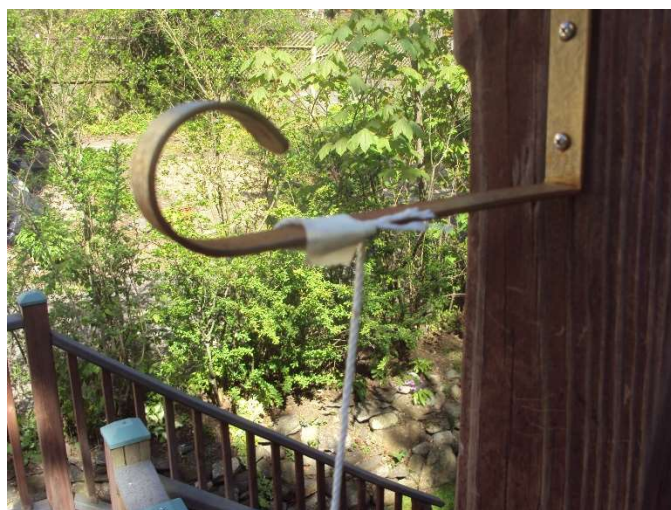
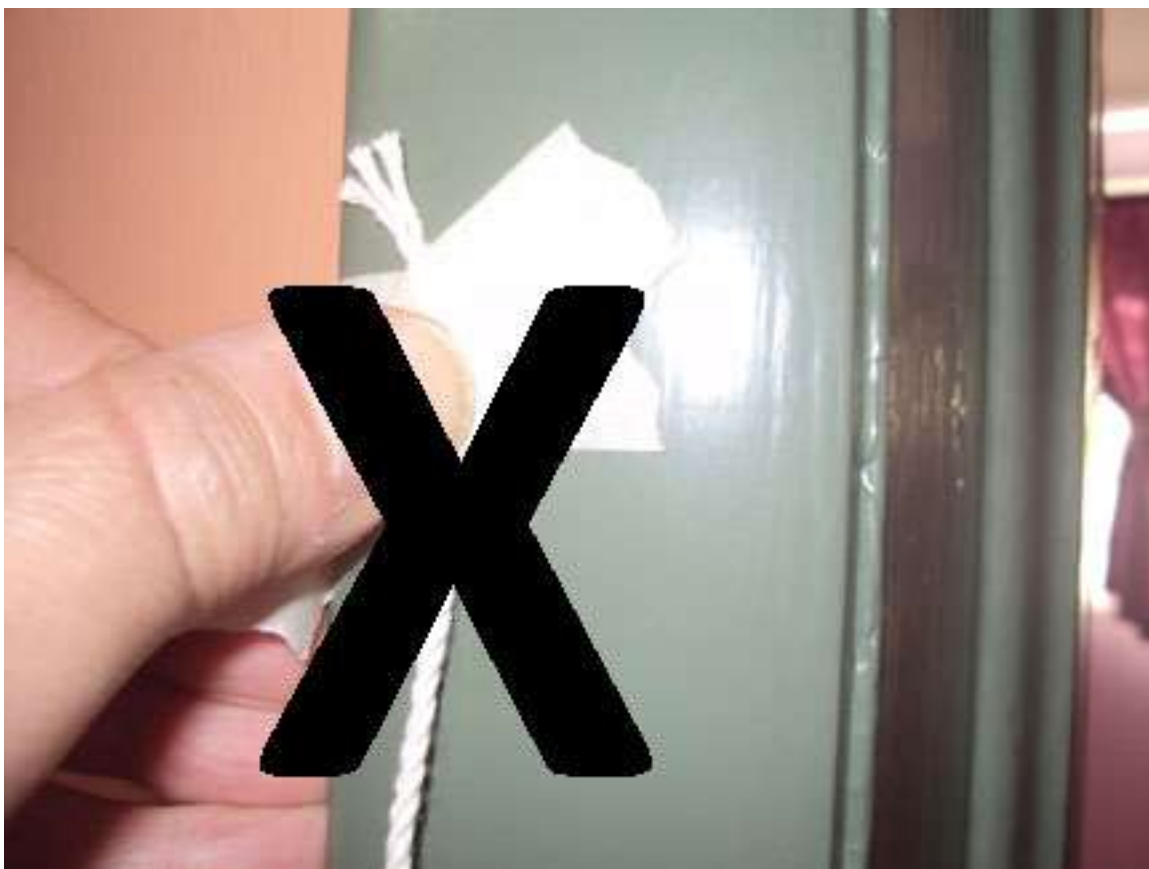


Balloon Rockets! and a little story

Step 1: Start by taping one end of the string securely to a piece of furniture or, really, anything at least 4' or so off the ground/floor. You can do this indoors or outdoors.



DO NOT tape it to any painted surface, because the tape might pull the paint off when you remove it.



(I actually did this when I was making these instructions. That's how I know that the paint can come off. Oops.)

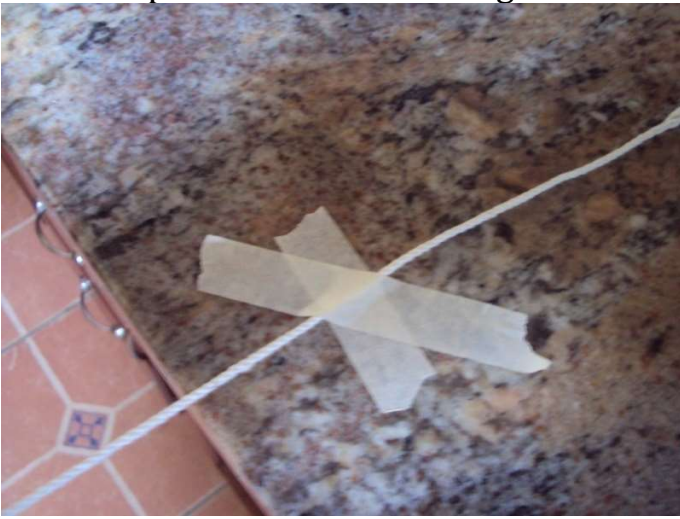
Step 2: Stretch the string across the room to another non-painted object and cut it about 6" longer than the distance that you stretched it.



Step 3: Slide the string through the straw . . .



... and tape the end of the string to the other object:



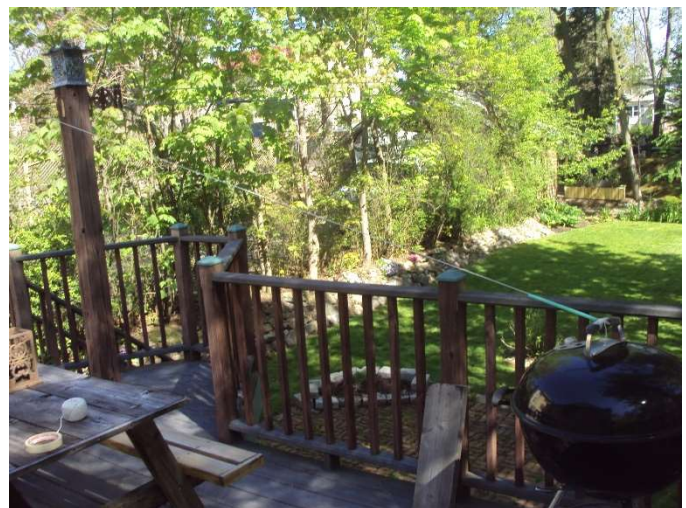
You want the string taut like this:



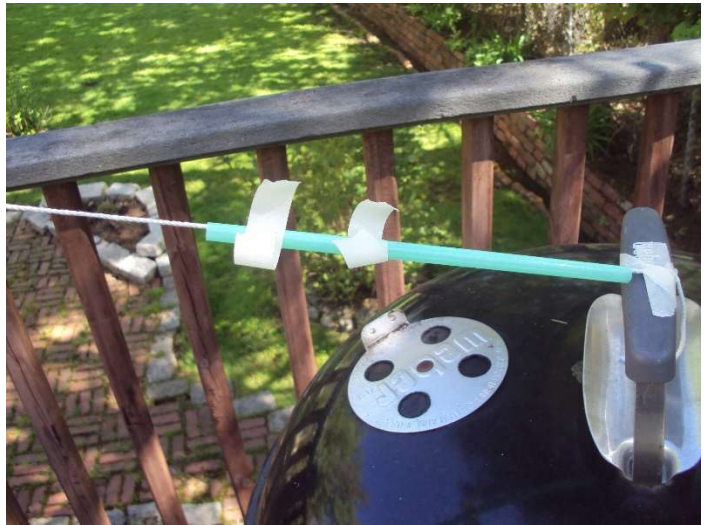
Not loose like this:



The handle of the top of my charcoal grill worked well because then I could pull back on the grill and make the string taut.



Step 4: Put 2 pieces of masking tape on the straw.



Step 5: Blow up the balloon. Hold the end closed.



Step 6: Use the two pieces of tape to attach the balloon to the straw. This can be difficult because you are holding the balloon closed with one hand, so you have to tape it one handed. But c'mon, you can do it.



Step 7: Let go of the balloon and say “Whoa, cool.”

A little story.

I was doing this outside. I let go of the balloon and it zipped along the string. The rocket slammed into the um . . . the a . . . thing that I'd attached the string to.



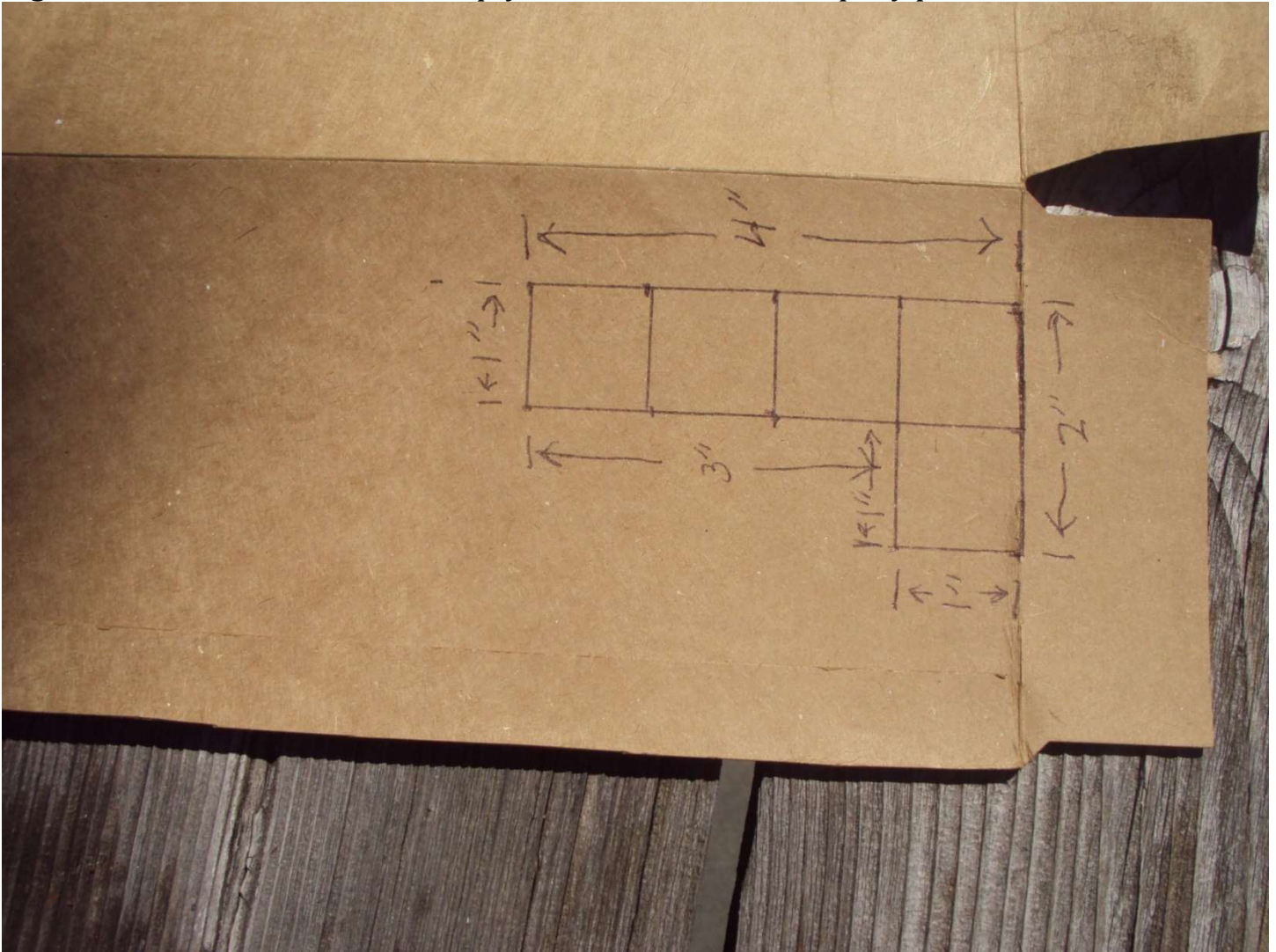
The straw stopped moving, but I hadn't taped the balloon very well, and the balloon kept going, flying off into the neighbors' yard.

(That's okay. They're used to this sort of thing.)

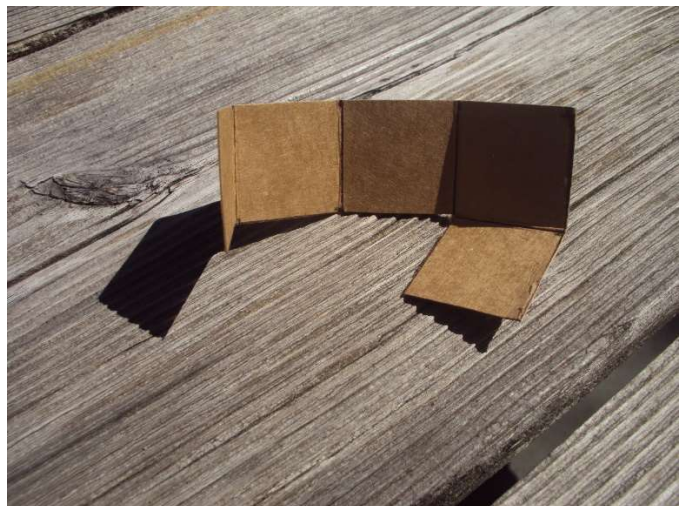
But that's when I had a stroke of genius:

"I'll build a peanut launcher!"

A got some cardboard from an empty cereal box and drew up my plans:



I cut it out and folded it...



... and taped it together into a box.



I left the front open and taped it to the front of the straw.



That's when I discovered that I didn't have any peanuts. Fortunately, a friend had given me a bag of trail mix so, being flexible, I was able to turn my device into a cashew launcher.



It was time to test it.



The cashew launcher zipped across the string and crashed into the um, thing. The balloon flew off into the neighbors' yard again, but the little box remained attached to the straw!

Unfortunately, the cashew remained stuck in the box.



I tried a couple more times. Same result. "Grrrr. Stupid cashew." Then I realized that because the string was at an angle, the box was, too, and the cashew didn't have enough momentum to go uphill, flying off into space. So I cut a notch into the bottom of the box so that the cashew didn't have to go uphill on the way out of the box. What a clever idea!



The cashew kept falling out of the box.

So I made a new box, but this time, I changed the design so that the floor was tilted downward.



The cashew kept falling out of the box.

So I adjusted the angle of the floor so that it was more or less level:



It took a bit of trial and error, but eventually, the cashew didn't fall out.



So I tested it.

It worked! Both the cashew and the balloon landed in the neighbors' yard! Oh, Dr. Simonelli, you are SO clever. This will make me famous. And rich, too!

But then I realized that, from a marketing point of view, there probably wasn't much demand for cashew launchers.

Rats.

And that's when it hit me: A mechanical mosquito zapper! Everyone hates mosquitos. Or if they don't, they should. All I need is a better missile, something more lethal than a cashew.

Here it is. I call it: The Missile of (Mosquito) Death



And here is my device, ready to deploy:



Missile of Death.

Here's how it works: you get the Mechanical Mosquito Zapper (MMZ) set up and ready to launch. You stand there, holding the balloon closed, and wait for a mosquito to fly in front of the MMZ. When it does, you yell: "Hey, Mosquito!" The mosquito will stop and look around to see who is calling it. When it does, you let go of the balloon, and WHAM! No more mosquito.

This is clearly a major advance in public health, perhaps the most important invention since the mood ring. What a great design! I can't see how anyone could improve upon this.

Can you?