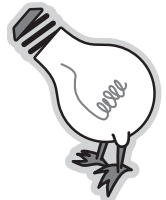


**wunderkasten #L010**

# **introduction to Wunderkasten**



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## What is a wunderkast?

The word “wunderkast,” translated from the German, means “wonder box”. It references the 16th and 17th century Wunderkammern, or “wonder rooms,” which were rooms set aside by wealthy owners to display collections of odd, wonderful, and sometimes fraudulent objects from all over the world. They were used by their owners to show off their wealth and erudition, to model known aspects of the world, and as philosophical conversation starters.

Wunderkasten are little versions of this idea. Only instead of being about the entire world, each one is about a particular topic. Inside you will find many things with which you can learn about the topic.

They are one of the many free range learning services offered by **Fresh**. When you sign up for the service, (or someone else signs you up as a gift) this **introduction to wunderkasten** is the first box you receive, as an operation manual of sorts.

## How do you use one?

Upon receipt, it's a good idea to open it up and check the contents list on the inside lid. This way you can immediately report if something in the box is missing or damaged so that you don't get charged for it when you return it. Report damaged or missing items by email to [deliveryproblem@freerangelearning.com](mailto:deliveryproblem@freerangelearning.com).

Other than this, they are free form. That is, there is no one right way to use wunderkasten. Some people just enjoy the activities. Others like to use them adjacent to a course of study. You can use them in any way that best suits you. There are common components to each one, and these are discussed below.

### Box number

Each wunderkasten has a unique identifier. For example, this box's identifier is L010. The letters at the beginning indicate to what knowledge domain the boxes belong. In this case, L indicates it belongs to the *Learning about Learning* domain. The numbers are like an address for each one. You may be interested to

know that the lower numbers indicate broader overviews of each topic.



### The Booklet



You are reading the booklet now. Booklets are the basic texts for each wunderkasten. In them you will find texts, pictures, stories, and other words related to the topic. In addition to texts, you will find suggested activities and details of who authored the particulars of the box. **Fresh** believes that no knowledge is absolutely authoritative, and ascribing authorship reinforces this idea.

### The Activities

According to modern learning theory, especially *constructionism* as espoused by Seymour Papert, the act of creation is the singular best way to learn something. To this end, each wunderkast booklet contains some suggested activities and

often materials to complete those activities. There are often activities for one person and others for you to share with others.

### Wearable and Display items

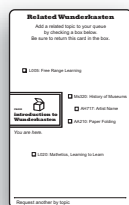
Many other modern learning theories such as Lev Vygotsky's *Social Learning Theory* and Lave and Wenger's *Communities of Practice* indicate that our learning is best reinforced by participation in groups. In other words, by talking and making with other people. Many of the wunderkasten include things for you to wear or display. You can use these to start discussions with people you meet, or act as a reminder to yourself about your learning topic throughout your day.

### The cards

You will find a small envelope of cards in each wunderkasten. Each of these has a separate function, described below.

#### *Related Wunderkasten*

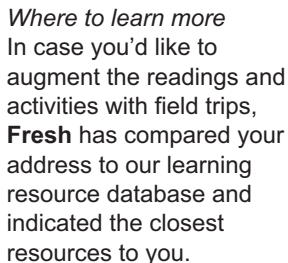
As a service, you keep your current wunderkast as long as you like. When you return it, the next box in your queue is delivered to you as soon as possible. Use



the related wunderkasten card to add things to your queue.

All the topics in the wunderkasten are related somehow to others. They could be a component of a broader topic, or contain other, smaller components. Additionally, there are often topics which are peripherally related. The most popular of these related boxes are indicated on the card. Simply check any of the boxes whose titles interest you, and when Fresh receives your box, those will be added to your queue.

If you are interested in getting an unrelated wunderkasten, use the “Request another topic” line at the bottom of the card. We will try and find the topic that most closely matches what you wrote.



We can only learn by building on prior knowledge. For this reason, every wunderkasten (but this first one) provides some simple explanations of what lessons in your prior wunderkasten experience inform your current topic. Based on Howard Gardner's *multiple intelligences*, these connections are in 9 categories:

- Verbal-linguistic
- Logical-mathematical
- Visual-spatial
- Body-kinesthetic
- Musical-rhythmic
- Interpersonal
- Intrapersonal
- Natural
- Moral

Should you decide to keep any of the items in a wunderkasten, or if any returned items are damages, your account will be automatically charged the prices indicated on this price list. Any such charges appear on your monthly statement.

This is an opportunity to provide your feedback to help improve the wunderkasten service. If you like, take a

moment to fill out the card with your name, the date, the wunderkasten number, and any thoughts or stories regarding your experience with this wunderkasten. **Fresh** free range learning services is dedicated to continually improving its

services, and listens attentively to your input and suggestions.

## Returning your current wunderkasten

We each learn at our own pace, and therefore there is no time limit to how long you can keep a wunderkasten. Keep them a day, a week, or a month. When you feel you are done, be sure to do the following.

1. Pack up any items that originally came with the box and which you have decided not to keep.
2. Fill out the Related Wunderkasten card
3. Fill out the Diary card
4. Send a quick email to this address: [pickuprequests@freerangelearning.com](mailto:pickuprequests@freerangelearning.com). Your email can be short, even just “next box, please”, and the next box will be delivered as soon as possible.

## This wunderkasten

Now that you have learned about wunderkasten in general, you can read about this wunderkasten in particular. It is of course designed to introduce you to the service, but there are also some fun activities, too.

### Author



Hi, I'm Chris Noessel, author of this wunderkasten and the concept in general. I developed them as part of my master's project in interaction design. Designing activities for a box which is about a system of learning boxes is a bit tricky, but I think I've found a few you might enjoy.

### Activities

#### Activity 1: *Rethinking everyday objects*

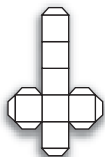
Tip this wunderkasten over and you'll find that its interior has a 17th century illustration of a wunderkammern. Find nearby objects and place them in this miniature room. What do these objects



have in common? Does organizing them a certain way imply anything about them? Try some very

strange objects and see if you can still give the collection some meaning. If you were to give someone a tour of your miniature space, what stories could you tell? I included a paper doll who can act as docent if you don't feel comfortable doing it. Photograph the box when you're happy with it, and then start again.

### Activity 2: *Making your own*



Find a sheet of paper in the wunderkasten with a shape you can cut out to make your own small wunderkasten with someone else or for someone else. If you want to make multiples, you might want to

make copies of the original first. When you are making wunderkasten for someone else, think about how what you are making is a good fit just for this person. What would they enjoy doing? What pictures and things would help them learn the topic? The more you customize it, the more they

will enjoy the gift of this little peice of yourself. Who knows, you might discover a lifelong learning partner.

### Activity 3: *Bigger and Bigger*

Even after you return this box, you can use the concept of modeling everyday objects in your life. Use the things on your desk, or in a room in your home, as parts of a map of something important to you, like a personalized Feng Shui. The more unusual or interesting your arrangement, the more likely you'll be asked about it, and the more likely you'll get to be like the Medicis, showing off your learning and starting some fun higher-level conversations.

### Items

#### Charlie-in-the-Box

I included a small figurine of a Charlie-in-the-Box. This character is from the Island of Misfit Toys, from the American animated Christmas classic in *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. I included it because the wunderkasten are designed to be full of unexpected surprises and wonder. And Charlie was on the Island of Misfit toys because most people expect a Jack. You

can sit him on your desk or coffee table. He also has a small loop at the top, so you can loop some string from here and hang him as well, from a doorknob or your car's rear view mirror.

### **Cube pin**

I also included a small piece of jewelry I found in a shop in the small northern Italian town where my grad school was. It is simple and attractive, and had the box shape I had conceived for the project. I hope it serves as an attractive mnemonic and conversation starter.

### **Conclusion**

Now that you know what the wunderkasten system is all about, enjoy it. Try some of the activities, play with the simple objects within. When you're done and eager to get the next wunderkast, fill out the diary and the Related Wunderkasten cards and drop us an email. We'll get you the next one as soon as we can, and get you on your wunderway.

### **Closer**

"The ancients who wished to demonstrate illustrious virtue throughout the kingdom, first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things...From the Son of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides."

Confucius, The Great Learning