

Make A Butterfly Suncatcher

Explore butterfly colors by making a suncatcher!



Materials Needed:

Butterfly template (or draw your own), wax paper, black construction paper, tissue paper in various colors, liquid glue, paintbrush, scissors, pencil.

Instructions:

Step 1: Cut out the butterfly template. Make sure to cut out the inside section! Place the template on the black construction paper. Trace around the template, then cut out the black paper.



Step 2: Cut a piece of wax paper about 9 inches (23 cm) wide by 6 inches (15 cm) long. Use a paintbrush to apply a thin layer of glue to the wax paper.

Step 3: Cut or tear pieces of tissue paper. Arrange them on the wax paper to make a design. Make your butterfly look realistic, or use your imagination!

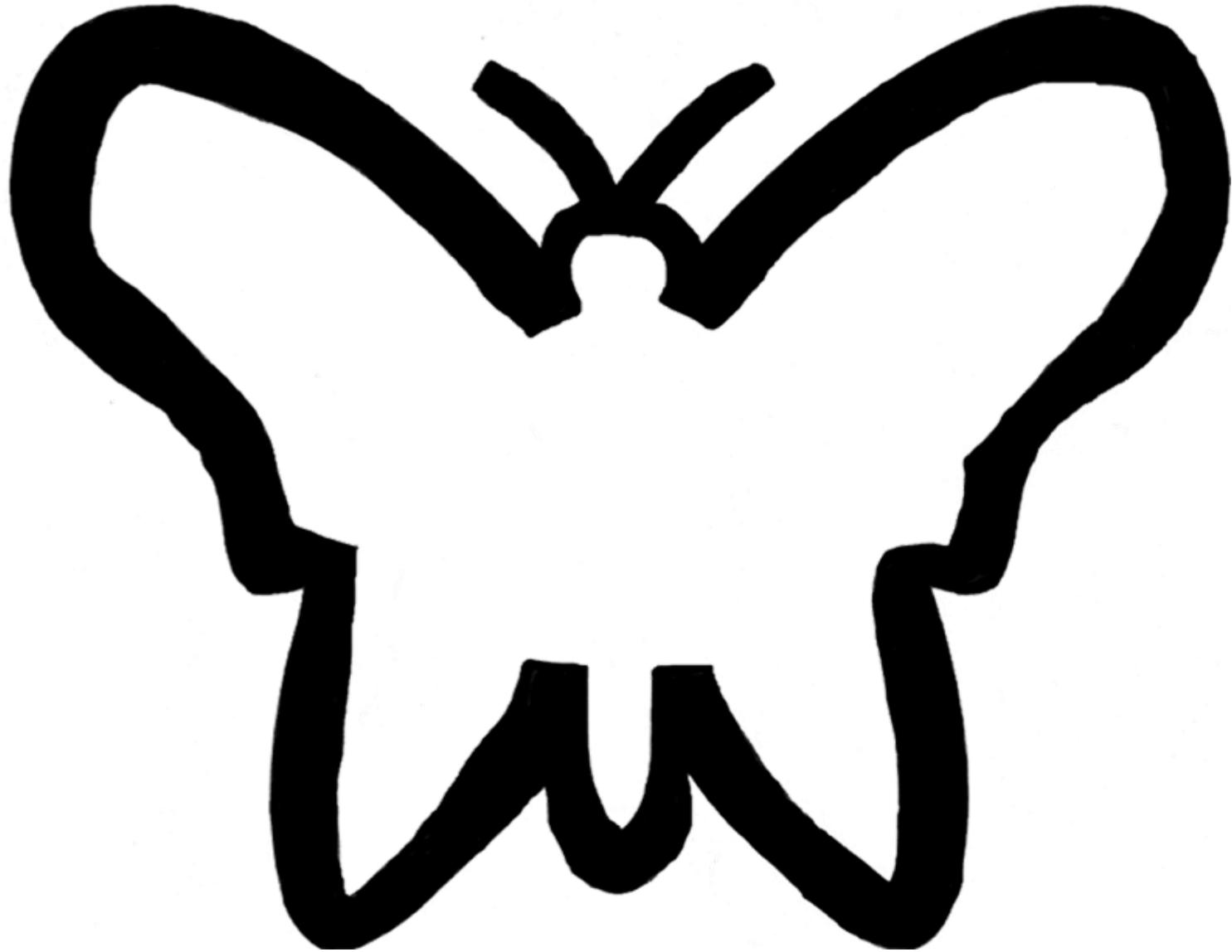
Step 4: Apply glue to one side of your black butterfly outline. Lay it on top of the tissue paper, glue side down.

Step 5: Brush another thin layer of glue over the top of the butterfly outline and tissue paper. This will help seal everything.

Step 6: Let your suncatcher dry. Once the glue is completely dry, trim the wax paper around the butterfly shape. Hang your suncatcher in the window and admire the sunlight shining through!



Butterfly Suncatcher Template



Butterfly Colors

There are about 80 species of butterflies in Alaska. They come in many different colors and patterns, from the black-and-yellow Mourning Cloak to the blue shades of the Alaskan Blue and the tan-and-brown Tanana Arctic.

There are many reasons for butterflies to have specific colors and patterns:

Camouflage: Colors help butterflies blend into their environment and avoid predators. Alaska butterflies live in many different habitats, including boreal forests, tundra, bogs, fields, open meadows, and scree slopes (loose rocks at the base of cliffs). Coloration patterns help them match the colors of their surroundings.



Common Branded Skipper (*Hesperia comma borealis*). [Image: Ken Philip.](#)



Warmth: Butterflies need to absorb sunlight to stay warm. Darker colors absorb more sunlight, so some Arctic species have dark wing patterns.

Left: Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio canadensis*) basking in the sun. UAMN photo.

Warning and Mimicry: Although there are no poisonous butterflies in Alaska, in other regions some species are brightly colored to warn predators that they are poisonous. Other non-poisonous butterflies have patterns that imitate poisonous species to fool predators.

Discover more about Alaska butterflies and see photos of the Kenelm Philip Collection: kenphilipcollection.alaska.edu

Did You Know? Blue Morpho butterflies (genus *Morpho*) which live in Central and South America, appear to have vibrant blue wings. But their wings don't have any blue pigment! They have tiny, overlapping scales covering their wings. Light waves bouncing off the scales interfere with each other, and only blue wavelengths bounce back to your eyes, making their wings look blue. This is an example of *structural color*: color produced by the interaction of light waves with an object's structure.



Blue Morpho.
[Image: NISEnet.](#)