

Arena Tips – by LaserVenture

The following notes are intended as a guide for customer who are planning to build their own arena maze(s) using our free panel/drum maze design service.

Proportions - Drum Maze/Panel Maze

- You must ensure that you have made adequate provision in order to meet all the local regulations, not least of which are providing adequate fire exits.
- Fit the lighting. You will require a minimum of fifteen 1.2m black-light tubes per 100 sq. m. of arena
- If you are incorporating a drum maze, allow for somewhere between 25% and 40% drum area to panel area. Drums should be positioned and spaced so that players cannot run straight through.
- Clear the area
- Mark a start point and draw a central line
- Fit the panels
- Paint the panelwork
- Fit the strutting
- Decorate
- Fit any floor covering

General

- The arena should have forced ventilation. This should be variable speed since you want to keep the play area fresh without immediately sucking out the smoke.
- Make sure that you check before starting what is necessary to ensure compliance with local health, safety and fire department regulations.
- Intelligent target locations will require a mains voltage (115-240 volts 50/60Hz) supply above the top of the panelling.

Panelwork

- Avoid long runs where players can build up speed, except round the outside where space has been left for safe evacuation in the event of an incident.
- If you look closely you will see that the arena is largely symmetrical, radiating out of the centre of the main area. This is important as it helps dis-orientate the players. We usually mount some illuminated 'control panels' or 'reactor instruments' on the central hub.
- Be careful where you place cutouts ('murder holes'). Too many will reduce the surprise element when taking corners.
- Have cutouts at varying heights - players vary in size, and also different height panels help the game.
- If you use MDF panels, which although a little more expensive, be sure and wear dust masks when cutting.
- The finish of the posts is not critical but do make sure and remove and sand any splinters.
- The cheapest way to make the studs is to buy metre lengths and get a workshop to machine cut them into 10cm pieces.

Painting

- For painting we recommend that you hire an airless sprayer. These are simple to use and take only a little while to get used to.
- Do not spend large amounts of money on special paint. Use a cheap grade of white silk emulsion and add approx. 10% matt black. This will give a good 'industrial finish' colour. If you coat the panels as advised by the hirers you will only need one coat.
- You should be able to coat all the panels in a morning, but you will need a helper to keep you supplied with paint. the machines work *very* fast!
- Make sure and wear a good quality mask when spraying. the hirers will probably sell these.

Strutting

- Strutting should be painted matt black with a roller on the three visible sides before cutting and fixing into place. It might seem to make sense to cut the strutting to size first, but we recommend that you restrict the cut lengths to the single sections. If you pre-cut the struts and then the panels are slightly out of square then you may waste material.
- Drill an 8mm hole in one end of the strutting and screw it in place. The strutting can then be cut to size and the other end drilled in situ.
- The preferred fixing is an 8mm flanged coach screw. If you have a reasonably powerful electric screwdriver, obtain a socket to suit the screw.
- You will need at least two lengths of screw, because sometimes you will be fixing through one one strut - other places you will be fixing through two or even three.
- Any bare end of strutting can be painted black when all the strutting is in place.
- When strutting the drums, make sure and tie the strutting to the panelwork to make the structure as stiff as possible.

Decoration

- A simple and very quick method of decorating the bulk of the panelling is the 'industrial rivetted plate' appearance. For this you need some different size hardboard templates (typically 1.5m x 50cm, 60cm x 60cm, and so on). Stiffen these with a wooden batten, place on the panels and, using a matt black spray-can, spray along two edges to create a shadowed effect. Inside the 'plating' spray very short burst of paint to create a neat row of rivets. When the paint is dry, highlight the 'rivets' with white paint applied with the end of the cork from a wine bottle. For a further illustration of this plating effect have a look at <http://www.laserventure.com/arenas.htm>.
- Using the above quick decoration method means that you can then provide a smaller quantity of spot decoration, maybe with murals, simulated windows and doorways. The latter, if left 'open' showing perspective walkways, help enlarge the feel of the arena. All paint used for spot decoration should be fluorescent.
- A quick way for livening up darker areas deeper in the maze is to spray 'alien trails' on the walls with a red fluorescent spray-can.
- Drums need to be decorated in order to make them visible in the reduced lighting. A quick method for drum decoration is to flick them with fluorescent paint to simulate drips of 'toxic' substances. Another inexpensive approach is to have some self-adhesive labels printed with various 'hazard' and 'radioactive' signs.

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