Stand assembly:

Push the stand into the back of the stand with the ship tilted down.
In one timeline shown to Captain Jonathan Archer, the U.S.S. Enterprise-J was a 26th century ship that was operated by the United Federation of Planets. It had a multi-species crew that included a race Archer was fighting in 2154: the Xindi.

The Enterprise-J was a massive ship that measured two miles in length. Its structure seemed impossible by 22nd-century standards but it used advanced technology and materials that were barely imaginable in the early days of spaceflight. Among its many accomplishments, the Enterprise-J took part in the battle of Procyon V in which the Federation pushed the sphere builders back into their own space and saved the Galaxy.

There was still an Enterprise in the 26th century: a massive ship that played a part in an historic battle.
The Enterprise-J "existed" in a timeline that was shown to Captain Archer as part of a temporal cold war and it is unclear whether it is part of the future that will come to pass.

Although Daniels told Archer that the ship they were on was the Enterprise-J the registry on the hull simply reads NCC-1701, as it did on the Constitution-class ship commanded by Captains Pike and Kirk in the 23rd century.
Doug Drexler is very clear that if the design of the Enterprise-J was going to be a success, it had to look ridiculous. “Its structure had to be impossible. It had to be impossible in overall size, mission, and facilities. I knew that if someone looked at it and didn’t say, ‘That’s ridiculous! One photon torpedo would knock off a nacelle like a soap bubble!’ I’d failed. I knew it had to break ape-brain rules in order to fulfill the order of far-flung future.”

As Drexler recalls the brief was pretty basic, and all he really knew was that the Enterprise-J had to look futuristic and that it had to be ready in two days time. “I remember Herman saying, ‘Mister Berman would like to see designs for a starship at least four hundred years ahead of where we are now. I need some sketches to take to him the day after tomorrow.’”

The need to look even more futuristic than all the other Enterprises was what made Drexler feel it had to look fabulous. “We’ve been designing starships for decades,” he says, “How do you say futuristic, when you have been living the future for that long? Where do you go? In a way it is very similar to the problem that Andy Probert was given when designing the Enterprise-D. Gene Roddenberry was looking for a ‘recognizable’ Enterprise that was unquestionably different. That’s a real challenge. You’re stepping into a minefield. Dedicated fans would see it as an affront to their beloved Enterprise. Like what had gone before ‘wasn’t good enough.’”

Drexler firmly believed that in order to look futuristic, the Enterprise-J had to break the rules — to do something that seemed impossible. “The status quo,” he insists “was our enemy.”

He started the process by producing a series of quick pencil sketches that gave an impression of the kind of shape he was looking for. At this stage he says the idea wasn’t to come up with a polished drawing, but just to establish a design direction and to find a distinctive shape. “This was
especially important with the Enterprise-J, because I knew that we would only be seeing it for a second or two. It had to have a dramatically different signature, yet it still had to be an Enterprise.

SOLID FOUNDATIONS

Drexler believes that a good design shouldn’t just spring from a ‘nice’ shape but should be rooted in an understanding of how the ship functions and what is inside it. So, like an actor preparing for a role, he developed a backstory for his ship.

“It was important that the basic mission profile, and its capabilities be developed before I went too far with the design. Even if people hated it at first, once they found out that it was all built around a real skeleton of imagination, and thought that respected the world they loved, they would get behind it 110%. If they find out that you’ve built it on farts, you’re doomed.”

Drexler figured that by the 26th century the way we build things will have changed radically and this would have implications for the shape of the ship. “The Enterprise-J would not be welded together. The very idea that a ship of this magnitude would be built like a 20th-century trestle was absurd. Sparks spewing from welding torches? Positively laughable! More ape-brain thinking that had no place here, and honestly, to my way of thinking, had no place on any of the Enterprises after the NX.

“No, the Enterprise-J would be ‘grown,’ like an organic animal. Even today we are printing parts for machine. SpaceX is printing rocket engines. What’s it going to be like in 500 years, and on a grand scale? Structures will be printed. Structural members will not be trusses and girders. Not by a long shot.”

IMPOSSIBLE SHAPES

Advances in materials would also mean that the ship’s designers wouldn’t be concerned with the kind of limitations we face today. "Its elegant curves are based on the optimal shape to support itself with a minimal amount of building material," he explains, "because structural members will be ‘printed,’ we will be able to custom design every individual part to cater to gradient stress distribution. This will allow us to take advantage of fractal patterns in the construction of the Enterprise-J. Not only is this mathematically more advantageous than standard truss construction, but it will give the ship a heretofore never seen design ethic.”

Another decision Drexler made was that the ship would be massive. “You know how the original Enterprise was described to Charlie X as ‘a whole city in space?’ The 1701 was really a village compared to the J. At two miles in length, it even dwarfed the D.

“You can live in an ‘apartment’ similar to what we have seen on the D, but imagine that there are suburbs on the ship, that are like living in a valley on Earth, with a sky, and a sun. “Your starship, would have large parks, entertainment zones, and entire universities on board. The ship is so large that turbolifts would be replaced with site-to-site transporters. If you’re not in a hurry, you can catch the Grand Concourse Freeway, and drive your 20th-century Maserati into the ‘Urbs.’ Sometimes a holo experience gets to be psychologically unfulfilling. The same would go for rock climbing, and skydiving. On this ship you can do the real thing.”

In another effort to move into the future, Drexler...
figured that the inside of the ship would abandon the traditional concepts of up and down, which, after all, were redundant in a zero gravity environment.

“The ship also had prominent, huge windows that covered large parts of the hull. Most people imagine that these would be ceilings and floors, meaning that our feet are always pointing ‘down’ in relation to the ship’s direction of flight. But why? We control gravity and energy fields. There are large areas where your feet are pointed toward the center of the saucer, and the supposed ceiling and floor windows are actually walls. Now you’re doing some stuff that a lot of people will crinkle their nose at! Good job!”

“What is it like living on a starship that is a quantum leap beyond everything that we have seen so far? Of course, if you do live in ‘quarters’ that are an apartment, you can change the holosettings to make it anywhere, or anything you want.

“What about the ship’s bridge? In truth you don’t need to ever leave your cabin. It can all be ‘conferenced’ wherever you are. You will go to a location that is physical, but physically malleable, to be any bridge that is the ‘Bridge Of the Day.’ The bridge crew on the Enterprise-J can fly any bridge in history. It’s part of their training, and it’s incredible fun.”

ALTERNATIVE DESIGNS

Armed with these ideas about how the Enterprise-J worked and what life aboard was like, all Drexler had to do was decide what it looked like. Because television is made at high speed – remember that he had a little over two days to develop his design – he started by pulling out an old design that he had always liked.

“When VOYAGER was in pre-production, and a ship search was in progress. I asked Mike [Okuda], ‘is there a pet idea of yours you’d like to see developed that we could pitch to the producers?’ Mike rubbed his chin thoughtfully. ‘You know those V shaped television antennas you see on automobiles? That.’

Drexler had worked the idea up but it had been rejected as too much of a departure from conventional Starfleet design, but since the Enterprise-J had to be so advanced, it seemed like a good option.

“I took that and fleshed it out. We both like this design because it broke from the saucer, yet still...
Drexler wanted the ship to be massive - he says that it is two miles long and is so large that it has highways inside it.

Drexler later decided that the J would belong to the Universe class and theorizes that it moves between Galaxies by folding space.

felt starfleet. It would evolve into what we called an Antares Class ship, and was used in the Ships Of The Line Calendar. The design had been submitted as an idea for the NX but once again it was considered too different. For the Enterprise-J I would sleek it somewhat, and rebuilt it in Lightwave.

“...So I had that, and I had some sketches. Now it was time to go to the computer and explore. I only had a matter of hours to stretch some polygons fueled by all the preparation. But this kind of pressure creates a creative zone in your head that is a blend of conscious and subconscious. Then you need to blend all of that with equal parts of terror. The preparation is the fuel, the spark that ignites it is fear. It’s an unbeatable combo. If you’re not scared, you’re missing one of the most powerful creative ingredients. I start modeling, and I mean fast. It’s a gesture sketch, but this time in the computer. I don’t worry about details, and I know I can suggest a lot in the texture with fast graphic maps made in Adobe Illustrator.”

THE CLOSING STRETCH

Within a matter of hours, Drexler had developed three serious alternatives: the rejected Voyager concept now dubbed the Altair class, a version where a saucer was added to that design, which Drexler called the Congo class and finally the design that would be chosen, which would eventually be named the Universe class.”

Zimmerman looked over the finished designs and gave his input before Drexler finally produced a series of short animations, which, as he explains, was radically new territory in 2004.

“Back then, designing in the computer was revolutionary. Suddenly we could size up a design by being able to turn it in 3D space, and see how light plays across the shapes. We may have been the first television art departments to make use of such technology. After I’d talked to Herman, the machine spat out a series of images. I feel positive, but I know that anything is possible. What a great feeling handing Herman a VHS tape to show the producers. Unheard of! After the meeting Herman came back with a big smile, and pointed to the approved Enterprise-J. ‘No notes,’ he said. ‘Send it to Dan Curry!’”

But as can also be the way in television, the Enterprise-J was a victim of budget cuts. The script had originally called for shots showing it fighting in the Battle of Procyon V, but it was decided that the story could still be told without seeing the J in action. Instead we saw Archer and Daniels inside the ship with a graphic behind them on the wall. It simply wasn’t the Enterprise-J’s time.
Few people involved in STAR TREK have had as varied a career as Doug Drexler, who since the 1970s has been a fan, a makeup artist, a scenic artist, a CG animator and a concept artist. Back in the 1970s Drexler set up a small store selling STAR TREK merchandise in New York, called the Federation Trading Post. This led to him being approached by Paradise Press and asked to write and edit one of the very first STAR TREK magazines.

The store was also responsible for bringing Drexler together with Geoffrey Mandel, a fellow STAR TREK enthusiast. Together they produced the USS Officer’s Manual, one of the very first STAR TREK Technical manuals. It was during this period that Paramount Studios announced they had greenlit a STAR TREK motion picture.

Drexler and Mandel wasted no time boarding a flight to LA intent on seeing the new Starship Enterprise. After managing to sweet talk their way onto the lot, they scored meetings with members of the art department and even came away with a letter of recommendation for their troubles.

Returning to New York, Drexler continued working in his store until he was offered a job as assistant to legendary make up artist Dick Smith, which came about after he asked Smith for advice about a Halloween costume. Drexler worked with Smith on the Ridley Scott film The Hunger and later films such as Starman, Fatal Attraction and Poltergeist III.

When the news broke that Gene Roddenberry was hard at work on a new STAR TREK series, Drexler was working in partnership with fellow makeup artist John Caglione. Drexler wasted no time setting up a meeting Gene Roddenberry and Bob Justman with a view to securing a job on the series. However, union rules prevented Drexler from accepting their job offer, while at the same time, Drexler and Caglione had an agreement in place not to uproot their business and move to the West coast without a firm job offer.

However, several months after that visit, Drexler and Caglione began work on Warren’s Beatty’s film adaption of Dick Tracy. Not only did their work earn Drexler and Caglione an Oscar for best makeup and hair, but it made Drexler eligible for union membership which in turn, made it possible for him to now accept Michael Westmore’s offer of work on TNG. Over the next three years, Drexler’s work on the series earned him two Emmy nominations. However, having struck up a friendship with Michael Okuda, Drexler made the decision to move over to the scenic art department just as DEEP SPACE NINE went into production. Initially hired as a scenic artist he worked alongside Okuda’s wife, Denise, while at the same time pitching in as a part-time illustrator. He also contributed to GENERATIONS, FIRST CONTACT and INSURRECTION.

Following the end of DEEP SPACE NINE, Drexler made another career change, this time moving over to VFX house, Foundation Imaging, where he developed his skills as a CG animator and modeller. Before long Herman Zimmerman approached him and asked him to return to the art department to design the Enterprise NX-01 for the series STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE. Drexler took up the offer to return to Paramount and continued working on ENTERPRISE as a senior illustrator, while at the same time lending his skills to the final TNG movie, STAR TREK NEMESIS. In his ‘spare time’ he has also produced art for the STAR TREK Encyclopedia and the STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE Technical Manual, for STAR TREK book covers and for the Ships of the Line calendars.

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Doug Drexler with the models of K7 and the original Enterprise that were made for the DS9 episode, Trials and Tribbleations, an episode that was as close to working on the original STAR TREK as you can imagine.

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The Enterprise-J’s designer really is a man of many talents and he has had the chance to influence STAR TREK in many, many ways.
ON SCREEN

TRIVIA

The Enterprise-J has had less screen time than any other Enterprise, with the possible exception of the Enterprise XCV-330, a ship that has only been shown as paintings and as a model. The J appears in a short sequence in a single episode - Azati Prime - and we only saw the exterior in a graphic that was on the wall behind Captain Archer. We don’t know the name of its captain and we don’t see a single crew member.

The Enterprise-J’s designer, Doug Drexler, speculates that the letter J does not necessarily mean that this is the eleventh starship to bear the name. He points out that this would mean that there were four ‘unseen’ Enterprise’s during the 25th and 26th centuries. Of course, we have no idea how precise Daniels was being when he said he had taken Archer 400 years into the future.

Totally coincidentally a drawing in the back of the STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION Technical Manual illustrating possible future directions for Starfleet design has very similar proportions to the Enterprise-J. Drexler has no memory of ever seeing this drawing.

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