



Mallet Making

Making a mallet is a classic Forest School activity. Not only is it a helpful tool once created to help with many other projects, but it also clearly teaches the woodworking principles of a stop cut and batoning.

Ages

6+ depending on tool competency and level of adult support

Duration

30 minutes as a guide, dependent on experience

Set Up

Ensure any participants have been briefed about safe knife use and safe saw use. It's great to show an example of a completed mallet or, better, to demonstrate the process with a piece of the wood you've harvested for making mallets so the group can see what they're working towards.

How To

- Harvest a length of wood for mallet making. For a group to make mallets, you'll want quite a length that is as straight as possible. To get a similar thickness throughout you'll likely find a previously coppiced stool very helpful or an area of dense young trees that grow thin and straight. Here we use sycamore as it was so abundant; we've also used birch, hazel, alder. In general, the harder the wood, the longer-lasting the mallet will be
- Before you saw your mallet length off the overall branch, it can be helpful to work with a longer section to saw your stop-cut first. Assess the branch - if there is a knotty section, use this for the head of the mallet as it will be more durable. You'll want minimal knots in the handle section
- Being precise in the placement of the saw angle, saw your stop cut all the way around the branch. You'll want to saw into the wood the depth to which you want to remove wood but leave enough untouched in the centre to become the handle.
- Note - it can be tricky, especially for children, to saw perpendicular to the wood precisely enough for the cut to join up in a circle (it may spiral round). It is helpful to check how the two ends of the saw line are coming together when about two-thirds of the way around so you can make adjustments to meet up.
- Once you're happy with your saw cut, saw right through the end of your mallet releasing it from the longer branch

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- With the mallet stood on its head on a stump, carefully place the fixed blade knife on the base of the handle and use either a previously made mallet or a manageable sized log to tap on the tip of the knife to baton a section of wood down off. As when carving notches, I recommend stopping the downward force toward the sawn stop cut before you reach it to avoid splitting right through the head of the mallet.
- Baton all the way around the handle, being careful to ensure the knife is not travelling to inside the stop cut.
- Once the bulk of the wood around the handle has been removed with batoning, you can round the handle with whittling.

Equipment Needed

- Wood, ideally straight and knot free, about 10cm in diameter as a minimum.
- Whittling knives (fixed blades for batoning)
- Saw
- Saw horse or 'Y' in tree for safe sawing positioning where needed

Variations

- You can add finishing touches such as rounding the end of the handle
- You could drill a hole through the end of the handle and add a loop of string for hanging it up
- You could add a symbol or initials of whose the mallet is with pyrography

Environment

- You'll need a safe working space for all whittlers and batoning areas

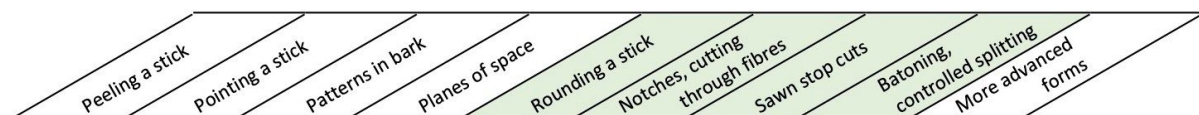
Teacher Tricks and Tips

- It's helpful to give children a feel of batoning when you're holding the knife and then help them become more independent with the process, helping each other and then eventually being able to do this on their own.
- One common challenge is as you're tapping the tip of the knife, the handle of the knife can rise up in response. Ideally whoever is holding the knife handle pushes down as the tip of the knife is being tapped.

Invisible Learning

- Focus
- Refined Whittling Skills
- Self Esteem

Here we have highlighted aspects of our progression of whittling skills this activity develops:



Hazards to Highlight

- Cuts from whittling
- Bruises from mishitting when batoning

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Risk Assessment Considerations

These are the risk assessment consideration documents to be referred to for this activity.

- Safe Knife Use
- Safe Tool Use
- Site risk assessment (specific to your site)

Links

- Skills Progression - Whittling
- Other Whittling Projects: Magic Wand, Staff Carving, Pegs, Mushrooms

Tags

- Carving, whittling, stop cuts, saw

