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Musical instruments and music making

Create simple percussion instruments to accompany singing and dancing activities. Challenge older children to create instruments with a “scale” such as xylophones or flutes made from bamboo or pipes. Give time to meaningful creation of sounds and rhythm, even inviting skilled musicians to assist in your music improvisation.

Drums

Drums are traditional musical instruments and are made with a variety of natural materials such as animal skins, and made materials such as rubber and metal tins. In many traditional cultures drums have a symbolic function and are often used in religious ceremonies. Drums are usually played with the hands, or with one or two sticks.

What you need

- Something for the frame (metal tin, carpet tube, ceramic pot).
- Pliable wire and pliers.
- Inside tube of a tyre.

How to make a drum

Cut the tyre tube 5cm larger in diameter than the frame. Cover the open side of the frame with the rubber. Wrap wire around the rubber on the sides of the frame and pull it tight. Twist a tight knot with the wire to secure the rubber to the frame. Make sure no sharp edges of wire stick out.

Drum sticks can be made from dead tree branches, old broom sticks or dowel sticks cut to size.

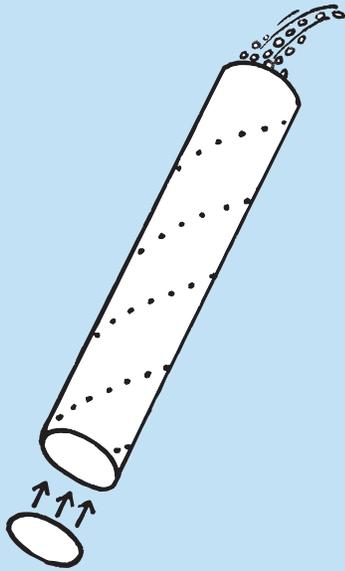


Rainstick

A rainstick is a long, hollow tube filled with small baubles such as beads, beans or rice. It has small pins or thorns arranged in a spiral pattern (see illustration below). When the stick is upended the beads fall to the other end of the tube, making a sound like a rainstorm as they bounce off the pins.

What you need

- Bamboo or cardboard tube (from paper towels, wrapping paper, fabric, posters).
- Straight pins (for thin tubes like paper towel or wrapping paper); nails (for thick tubes – nails should be shorter than the diameter of the tube); toothpicks (especially for bamboo).
- Popcorn, seeds, beans, beads for filling.
- Hammer (if using nails).
- Masking tape.
- Materials for decorating the outside (fabric, coloured masking tape, papier-mâché, paint).

HOW TO MAKE A RAINSTICK	
	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Insert pins or nails into the side of the tube in a spiral pattern.2. Cover the nail or pin heads with tape to keep them in place.3. Close off one end by taping on a circular piece of cardboard.4. Pour in filling (for different sounds, try different ingredients such as rice, beads, seeds, beans, popcorn).5. Close off the other end of the tube with a piece of cardboard cut to size.6. Decorate the outside of the tube with coloured tape, fabric, markers, paint or papier-mâché.	

Instruments made from waste materials

- **Coffee tin drum**

A coffee tin drum sounds better if the bottom is hammered into a concave shape. Use a cloth and a hammer to do this. Use a teaspoon to make different sounds: scraping on the side, tapping on the plastic lid, hitting the bottom on the edge and in the middle.



- **Shakers**

Use bottle tops and cool drink tin tabs to make a variety of shakers. You can also use plastic bottles, cool drink cans with seeds and small stones as shakers. Two deodorant spray lids can be forced together to make a shaker – dip the plastic in boiling water to make it mouldable.



- **Papier-mâché shaker**

This shaker is made with many strips of newspaper dipped in glue (diluted wood glue or office glue) and moulded around a balloon. After it has dried hard, the balloon is popped.

Pellets, rice or small stones are added into the middle and a stick attached in the hole. Another layer of glue paper strips is added to strengthen and to secure the holding stick in place. Once the glue has dried, decorate the shaker.



- **Bottle xylophone**

Collect bottles and fill them with water to different levels. Ask a musician to help you tune them. Make a sound with a spoon.



Veld instruments

Use natural resources from the veld to make beautiful indigenous instruments.

Always use natural resources in a sustainable way – do not destroy trees and plants unnecessarily.



Making music together

Before a host of music makers and their instruments start noisily banging away, think about the music you would like to make.

First, hear what each instrument can do. Imagine what each instrument sounds like – the wind, the sea, thunder? Imagine the instruments having conversations – softly, angrily, excited? Try the coffee tin drums out and test the different sounds. Test how each shaker sounds.

Allow different instruments to sound themselves on their own. Get a rhythm going that everyone can follow. Try a popular song and beat a rhythm to go with it. Sometimes have all the instruments going, other times single out particular instruments to get variety.

You might divide the children into music teams to find their own song and accompanying sounds, and then perform for the others. Always have enough instruments for everyone to have one. Have them available for regular use.



Making music “sharp, sharp”

Young musicians in Mamelodi and Soweto experimented in a music project called “Sharp, sharp” and made instruments to accompany their music. They made a xylophone with brass plumbing pipes. The pipes rest on sponges and are held on by nails on one side. They also made a drum using packing tape stretched across the top of a plastic crate. The drum is beaten with a stick.

They even made a sewage pipe organ. Several pipes of different sizes were arranged on a frame. A beater was made with a block of wood attached to a handle, and a piece of foam backed carpet that was stuck onto the wooden block.

