



Make a Musical Rattle

The first musical instruments were percussion instruments – things to bang on, scrape together, and shake. They were made with materials found in nature. How would you like to make your own musical rattle?

Gourds make terrific maracas, or rattles. Use the hard-skinned kind known as calabash gourds. First you have to take the skin off the gourd. Do this by wrapping the gourd in an old towel soaked in a solution of liquid household cleanser and water. (Wear rubber gloves to protect your hands.) When the skin has softened (after several hours), scrape it off and leave the gourd to dry for 3 or 4 days.

Carefully cut a hole in one end of the gourd (start the hole with a nail; round it out with a hacksaw). Remove the pulp and seeds from inside the gourd with a spoon. Try to get as much out as possible. Let the gourd dry for a few more days. Then fill it with a handful of dried beans and plug the hole with a handle (cut a piece off an old broom handle, or find a stick the right size). Secure the handle with some glue and let dry. Give it a shake!

