

NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION FOR ALL RESOURCES

Partnership of IllumiNative and the National Indian Education Association



ILLUMINATIVE



Grade Level

3-5

Subject

Art & Culture

Lesson Title

Make Your Own Bullroarer

MATERIALS NEEDED

- An adult to help supervise
- A strong piece of string or twine (3 feet long)
- A flat piece of wood, thick cardboard, or a large popsicle stick (about 6 inches in length)
- Scissors for cutting the cardboard (if needed)
- If using wood, a drill/sharp object is needed to make a small hole in the wood for the string
- (Optional) WiFi access
- The YouTube video [Make a Buzzing Bull Roarer](#)

STEPS

The bullroarer is actually very simple to make, but you will need an adult to help. If WiFi is available, read this article [“The Bull Roarer is an Ancient Musical Instrument”](#) before you start. It shows examples of bullroarers from around the world.

Activity Steps:

1. If WiFi is available, watch the demonstration video on YouTube: Make a Buzzing Bull Roarer
2. Cut a 3-foot-long piece of string or twine and set it aside.
3. Then make the “roarer” board by cutting a flat rectangle that is about 6 inches long and 1 to 2 inches wide.
4. Round out the edges of one side of the board. Almost like a surfboard shape
5. On the rounded end of the board, drill a small hole for the string.
6. Thread the string through and make a large knot to keep it from slipping out of the board. You could also tie it in a loop at the top of board. Be sure the string won't slip out.
7. It is helpful to also make a large knot or tie a small piece of board to the other end of the string to hold it better while spinning the bullroarer.

Make it Roar:

1. Hold the ends of this string tightly (you can make a loop with the string to help your grip).
2. Whirl the board in a circle pattern above your head or out to the side. The faster you go the louder your sound will be.

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HELPFUL TIPS

Parents and Caregivers: This is an opportunity to teach safety when working with tools or sharp objects. Also, the history of bullroarers connects Native and indigenous people across the world. While doing this activity, share this information with your child:

- Many *indigenous cultures around the world have their own type of bullroarer usually decorated with their tribal symbols or colors.
- *Indigenous means "starting life from or living naturally in a particular place or region." (see link below)
- The bullroarer is one of the oldest musical instruments found on Earth.
- The bullroarer has been used by many tribes for communication because the low-frequency sound waves can travel far distances.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Families and Educators: This activity may lead your child to be more curious about bullroarers or other traditional Native instruments or objects used for games. He or she may also question the meaning of indigenous. Visit the sites below for more information:

- To view a list traditional Native games and tools for music or play, check out this list of "[Native American Games](#)" from the Office of the State Archaeologist at the University of Iowa.
- To learn more about North American tribes who used bullroarers read this [online article "Bullroarer"](#)
- To learn more about being indigenous, watch this YouTube video [What does Being Indigenous Mean?](#)

Activity Adapted from these Links:

- YouTube video Making a Bull Roarer by SchoolofToy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gy05kWu88u0>
- "The Bullroarer is an Ancient Musical Instrument" article from *The Vintage News* <https://www.thevintagenews.com/2016/12/15/the-bullroarer-is-an-ancient-musical-instrument-and-device-dating-from-17000-bc/>

Additional Links:

- "'Native American Games' from the Office of the State Archaeologist at the University of Iowa. <https://archaeology.uiowa.edu/sites/archaeology.uiowa.edu/files/NativeAmericanGames.pdf>
- "Bullroarer" article on 9Ways.org <https://www.9ways.org/sound-glossary/bullroarer>
- *What does Being Indigenous Mean?* a YouTube video from the CBC/Radio-Canada <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-zwP6q1GkM>