

NATURE ACTIVITIES

WALKING STICK

Looking for a fun activity to get ready for exploring outside?

Look no further. Here is an activity for making your hiking explorations complete by creating your own Walking Stick!

Resources/materials needed: Branches/sticks, paint, brushes, yarn, feathers, string, leather, polyurethane, rags, pocket knife, sand paper, beads, hemp, rope, bottle cap or plastic pipe fitting, epoxy, tacky glue

Skills: Cognitive, Motor Skills, Environmental Appreciation, Hand-Eye Coordination, Technical Skills, Creative Problem Solving



Photo Credit: The DIY Dreamer

DIRECTIONS:

Step 1: Go out in nature and find your walking stick! It should fit in your hand well and be on the taller side depending on how tall you are. A walking stick should be about 2 inches thick at the top and only slightly smaller at the bottom. If you can find one with the bark already off, that would be ideal for painting.



Photo Credit: Canva

Step 2: When you have found your walking stick, it is time to prepare it for decoration. If you have a lot of bark on your stick, you can whittle it off with a pocket knife. (appropriate for adults). Live wood is best for whittling, but if you have a dry piece, you can still take it off. You can choose to keep the bark on of course. Just be prepared for it to possibly fall off later.



Photo Credit: Backpacking Mastery

Step 3: When taking off the bark with a pocket knife, make sure that you cut away from your body and make sure that your other hand is not in the way. Have an adult do this part. Try to take all of the nubs off or sharp parts where twigs were connected. Try to whittle the bottom end down to a smaller point than the handle.

Step 4: When the bark is all off and branches cut off, you can now sand it down to get a smoother surface for decorating. You will want to start off with 60 grit and go up to at least 120.

Step 5: Depending on your process and if you don't want to decorate the walking stick, you can varnish it with a clear coat or tinted to make it waterproof and extend the life. Do one coat and let it dry completely. Now lightly with 220 grit sand paper and brush off dust. Now apply the second coat and let dry.

Step 6: To keep the end in tact, having a cap at the bottom of the walking stick helps. You can go to the hardware store and find pipe fittings that are about the same size as the walking stick end. If you can't find a perfect size, you will have to whittle down the wood until it fits. If you are a hunter or have a hunter in your family, shotgun shells fit well at the bottom and work perfectly also. Using a soda bottle cap is also a possibilities. Look around and engage in creative reuse!

Step 7: Once you have the bottom cap fit to the stick, take it off and apply epoxy resin or some sort of a permanent glue to the bottom of the stick and the cap. Insert the stick into the cap securely and let dry. If the bottom is open because you used a pipe fitting, it is a good practice to fill the bottom space with more epoxy just so there is a waterproof layer from the stick.

Step 8: If you would like a loop on the top, get your drill out and use a drill bit larger than your string and drill through safely at least an inch from the top centered while holding it securely with your other hand. If you can put this in a vice grip, it would be ideal.

You can tie a thin piece of leather, shoestring, yarn, braided hemp, beaded string through the loop. Get creative!



Photo Credit: DIY Dreamer



Photo Credit: Backpacking Mastery



Photo Credit: Backpacking Mastery

Step 9: Time to decorate your stick! This can take many forms. You can use a wood burner if you have one to make designs with that look. If you are skilled at whittling wood and the stick is still on the wetter side, you can carve in designs and make your walking stick more sculptural.

If you are working with kids on this, you can paint it or wrap it with yarn and string. The possibilities are endless!

Step 10: You can coat and stain it if you only did a wood burn -- refer back to **Step 5**. If you painted it, you can apply a clear coat polyuothane or some sort of clear acrylic on top of it if you wish.

Step 11: You can add grips where your hand will be. Stand the stick up and walk with it and see where you hold it. Make marks of 6" from each other and this will be the area in which you can put a grip.

Step 12: To make the grip, gather what you will be putting around. Leather or faux leather pieces in "string form" works well. hemp yarn does too.

Now use tacky glue or some sort of strong fabric bonding glue and put it all over the area where you will be making the grip.

Then start tightly wrapping the string or fabric around from the bottom up until you reach the top of where the glue stops. You can make ties, or just rely on the glue to hold everything in place.

Reflection: Talk about your experience. What was your experience searching for these materials? Do you like this process? What would you do differently next time? Does the stick work well when hiking? Is it the right fit for you hand and correct height?

Resources:

<https://thediydreamer.com/crafts/diy-walking-sticks/>

<https://backpackingmastery.com/skills/how-to-make-a-walking-stick.html>



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