

Log Puppet-making Instructions

This is a fun family activity introducing woodwork to make simple log puppets. It involves making a trip to the woodland where you can find a branch suitable for a log puppet and some smaller twigs to make a nose. For this project it is good to have already dried wood – but not the rotten one. When finding the wood, look for a branch that doesn't snap in half easily and it is not soft to touch, eaten by worms, etc.

Before handling tools, you will need to explain a child how to use them safely.

Activities are divided into two groups – **Adult woodwork**, which involves tools for adult use only, and **Child/adult woodwork** where you will need to closely supervise a child while handling sharp tools – don't take your eyes off them, and stand by their side. Help with bits the child finds difficult to do alone. That way they will grow more and more confident in using tools and eventually they'll be proud to use them without help.

Tools and materials you will need:

- Wood – branch for puppet's body (from around 2,5 – 5cm in diameter) and a smaller twig for the nose
- Vice
- Hand saw
- Electric drill + drill bits
- Felt tip pen for making marks on wood
- Knife (such as a folding penknife)
- Vegetable peeler (good quality one)
- Wood file
- Sand paper
- Junior hacksaw
- Small hammer
- Wood glue
- U-nails
- Nails (2cm) with large shiny heads
- Rope for arms
- Jute twine / string for hair
- Scissors
- Acrylic paint, thin paint brushes, paint palette, pot for water, cloth (alternatively use felt tip pens)



Adult woodwork:

If the branch you found still has a bark on, strip it off with a knife.

If you are a beginner in wood crafting, have a look at few useful rules on how to whittle safely:

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2019/05/how-to-whittle/>

Decide how tall is log puppet going to be.

Depending on how thick the branch is, the puppet could be from around 8 – 15 cm tall. Measure the branch, make a mark where would you like to cut it, and saw it off.

Now you will need a hole for puppet's arms (piece of rope). Before drilling a hole, make a mark in the middle of your small log. Put the log in the vice securely. Drill a hole in the middle, going all the way through the log until the drill bit comes out at the other end. Use the drill bit which will make a hole big enough for the rope to go through it.

<https://www.carpentry-tips-and-tricks.com/how-to-drill-wood.html>



Child / adult woodwork:

Children enjoy sanding off the rough bits of the wood and making it nice and smooth.

Prepare for them a small piece of sandpaper they can comfortably hold in their hands.



To make a nose, cut a twig to about 10 -15 cm in length. That way you or your child will be able to hold it in your hand while whittling the bark off. Children can start learning to whittle from around the age of 6. Good tool to start whittling with is a vegetable peeler, but the twig needs to be fresh. Striping the bark off the dry branch is easier with the knife.



Put the nose-twig in the vice, so that a part of the twig that will become a nose sticks out.
Let a child shape the twig's end with a wood file to make it round or pointy, depending on what shape nose they would like for their puppet.
Woodworking with files is very rewarding job for a child and there is very little risk there of children getting hurt.



Get a child to refine an end of the twig with sand paper. Leave the twig long enough so that it can easily be held by a child in their hand.



Put the twig back in the vice – it is a fun thing for a child to do, you just need to check it is securely squeezed in the vice. Make a mark where to cut the twig for a nose and a child can do it with a junior hacksaw. Show them how to do it properly, making steady, long moves with a hacksaw. You can also do it together for the very start.



Now that you've got the nose, put a small blob of wood glue on both nose and log-puppet and stick them together. Place the nose in a good position in relation to holes where rope arms will come through.

Allow at least 10 min for glue to dry. It takes longer for glue to dry properly, but if you've got fast action wood glue, 10 minutes should be enough to be able to handle the puppet.

Push the rope through the hole in the log and dub some wood glue inside holes to stick the rope in place.



Prepare for painting: a paint palette with small blobs of acrylic paint, thin paint brush, pot of water to rinse the paint brush in and a cloth to wipe the brush to make sure it's clean for the next color.

Let the child paint puppet's face and clothes. Leave paint to dry before getting on with the next step.



Prepare several pieces of jute twine that will fit inside the u-nail and leave enough space for the u-nail to be hammered to the head securely and tightly.

You might need more than one hair section to be hammered in like that.

An adult will need to start off with hammering as it is a twiddly jo.

Once the u-nail is standing firmly in the log, it is easier for a small child to hammer it in.

An adult might need to finish off the job too. Give your puppet a haircut or a hairstyling if needed.



Here is a log-puppet crew ready to play!

You can join in and find out what are the puppet's roles, are they a family, friends, or perhaps a pirate crew in search of a cardboard box they could use as a ship...



Log puppets have special musical skills. They can create different rhythms while dancing up and down on a table or a floor.

The possibilities are endless. Have loads of fun on the journey!



