

THE LEARNING CIRCLE

by Loren Woerpel, Noc Bay Trading Company

MAKING DRUMSTICKS

Northern style drumsticks are usually shorter and are more flexible than Southern style sticks. They also usually have fur heads rather than the harder leather heads, making a softer drum sound. Common lengths for these sticks are 19 inches for the Northern styles and 24 inches for the Southern style.

Today it is common to see a mixture of these sticks at northern powwows, as personal preference of a singing group often is the determination of which is used. It is now more common to see the Southern style, hard leather head sticks on traditional rawhide drums, though the lengths are often shorter.

These instructions are offered for both styles. We will continue using the terms Southern and Northern to define the styles as described above.

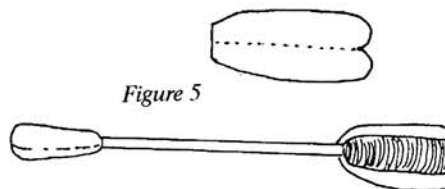
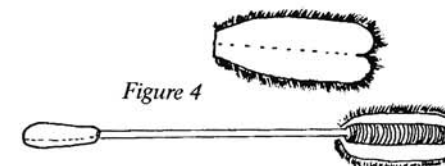
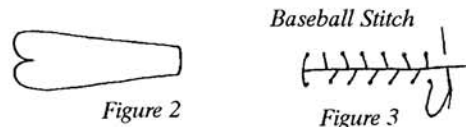
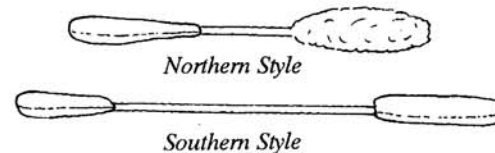
For Northern style sticks, we prefer 19 inch tapered fiberglass rods to give it flexibility. For Southern style sticks we prefer 24 inch 1/4 inch diameter fiberglass rods.

For both kinds, begin by building the handle first. Use the thickest end of the tapered rod for the handle end on Northern style rods.

Start by applying contact cement to about 4 inches of handle area on the rod and let it dry to tacky. Begin winding yarn over the 4 inch area. After one layer is applied, cover yarn area with contact cement and again let dry briefly. Continue to add layers of yarn and contact cement until desired shape and size is attained. See Figure 1. We prefer to have the bottom part of the handle wider (about 3/4 inch diameter) than the front part.

When this is finished, cut and tie off the yarn and coat the handle area once again with contact cement and let dry.

From a piece of leather of about 3 inches by 5 inches, cut a handle cover to shape based on the dimensions of your built up yarn handle. See Figure 2 for an idea of the shape of this cover. The cover should stretch tightly over the handle, so try it on and re-trim if necessary.



Sizes of handles and head will vary according to individual tastes. The balance and weight of the stick can be affected by using different materials for making the core of handle and head. The basic techniques described here still are effective.

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Think of this next step of like sewing a leather cover on a baseball. When your cover appears that it will sew on with some stretch, apply a thin coat of contact cement to the inside of the cover, and let it dry to tacky. Then apply it in position on the handle, covering the yarn built-up area. Using a glovers needle and size F nylon thread, wax the thread with beeswax. Begin stitching from the bottom to the top of the handle using a baseball stitch. See Figure 3.

NORTHERN STYLE

To complete the head of this style, first build up a yarn core of about 5 1/2 inches beginning at the tip. Use the same method as you did for the handle. We prefer this to be about 1 inch in diameter.

The fur for the head can be either simulated fur fabrics or sheep skin. From a patch of about 4 inches by 6 inches, cut a fur cover to fit your actual yarn core dimensions. See Figure 4. This should also fit with a little stretch.

After trying it on until you think it will fit, coat the inside with a light brushing of contact cement and let dry to tacky. Position the cover on the yarn core, and sew this in place using the same baseball stitch, starting at the top. End by sewing in a knot at the bottom of the head.

SOUTHERN STYLE

This style uses a leather cover. Before starting to make this head, decide just how long you want the stick and cut off any excess. A hack saw works well for this.

Using the same methods described above, build up a head core with yarn windings. The head length usually is about 6 inches long. The diameter about 1 inch to 1 1/4 inch in diameter.

From a piece of leather approximately 4 inches by 6 inches, cut a cover about in the shape of Figure 5 which will cover the shape and size of the yarn core. Try your cover over the core until it appears to fit with a little stretch. When ready, coat the underside with contact cement and let dry to tacky. As before, position the cover on the core and sew up using the baseball stitch.

DECORATIONS AND OTHER STYLES

Many singers like to use colored electrical tape or paint to decorate the shaft of the stick, or apply some bead wrapping to part of the handle. It helps identify the owner of the stick.