



Mic Conway's  
How to make  
Music With Anything





# Mic Conway's How to make Music With Anything

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## ABOUT THIS BOOK

I have always been fascinated by everyday objects that can sound good, but originally have had a different purpose. Some of these have been around a long time; others have been modified by others or me. I am the magpie who has collected them together. I have used them at different time within my shows or bands, along with themes on recycling and traditional music. A number of them use modern materials.

This booklet is designed to compliment the DVD, giving a bit more detail than what is possible with the film clips, so try to use both. Most instruments with the exception of a few can be made within less than 20 minutes. They all of course, need time to play and the more time you spend playing, the better you get and the more fun you have!

Most materials used are common to households, easily acquired and not expensive. You shouldn't need power tools, but if an adult wants to use a drill etc. – no worries! I have not specified left or right hand for making or playing, you can decide that yourself! I have measured things in metric, but most measurements are only a guide (Except xylophone pipe links). If you want to convert, roughly 30cm equals one foot, 4cm equals 1.5 inches and 100cm equals three feet. But don't get too hung up on measurements, they are mostly approximate.

In music with anything safety is important. Some instruments are more suited to adults, some more for children (and many for both). I have marked ones not suitable for children to make like the saw, teapot, lagerphone and tin can whistle.

All children will need supervision particularly using scissors, glue, hammers, sharp metal bits, glass and tying knots. Children under five are not suited for this at all. No responsibility is accepted for accidents – Be careful.

Most of all have fun! All of these instruments are an adventure – experiment and enjoy! Remember... you can make music with just about anything.

Mic Conway



## About Mic Conway:

ARIA award winning Mic Conway is an innovative performer who has worked extensively in music, theatre, film, television and theatre-in-education. Working in Australia and internationally, Mic started in Captain Matchbox Whoopee Band, co-founded Circus Oz, and has appeared in numerous films and television shows. He has recorded many albums and CD's (two gold records) and has fronted Mic Conway's National Junk Band for over 15 years.

Born into a family of vaudeville, theatre and opera performers, he brings many skills to his shows including... music, magic, tap-dancing, juggling, fire eating and puppetry.

Mic has regularly appeared on various children's shows including ABC for kids, the Wiggles, Humphrey Bear and was even the voice of Wags the Dog in the Wiggles TV shows and DVD's.



Mic has been performing about the environment for many years and regularly performs his Reduce Reuse Recycle show called "Rubbish" (which includes many of the instruments used here on "Music With Anything")

## About Joel Tarling:

Freelance artist, illustrator and graphic designer. His inspiration comes from the natural world, historical biographies, his South Coast childhood and Mic Conway's music.

Joel studied Fine arts at Meadowbank Tafe and Graphic design at the Design Centre, Enmore. His previously published work include: EPA Down to Earth An Earth Works Learner Guide (Social Change Media & Joel Tarling), Mac Australia Topics: History - Bennelong and Governor Phillip (Macmillan Education Australia) The Prosecution of Peter Pumpkin-Eater (Peter Hunt & Joel Tarling), Taylor's Troubles (Lowell Tarling & Joel Tarling)

Joel has also worked 5 years as an editorial cartoonist for Sydney City Hub with his work featured in The Green Weekly and The Big Issue

## Credits:

Joel Tarling – Booklet artwork and layout

Cathy Kirkpatrick – Filming, editing, photography and cover design

Thanks to Ro Cook, Tango Conway, Sydney Community College and Betsy Latimer

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Cathy Kirkpatrick © 2013

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# Drinking Straw Flute

What you need...



Plastic drinking straw

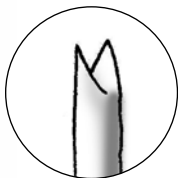


Wood screw/self tapper



Scissors

- 1 Cut point in one end of straw (snip twice at 45° to middle of end)



- 2 Slightly flatten the pointy end using your teeth. Gently bite on the straw with your front teeth. Slide it up and down until it's slightly flattened (still open just a little)



3



Use a wood screw/self tapper to make two or three holes, a fingers-width apart at other end. Hold straw between thumb and first finger press into straw and turn screw; feel it "grab" and turn gently till hole is formed. (Don't go through to other side)



Blow into pointy end to get sound and move fingers over the holes to change the note.



# Rubber Glove Bassoon

What you need...



Two cardboard rolls  
(30cm long approx.)



Disposable glove



Scissors



Masking tape



Flexible plastic tube  
(20cm approx.)

- 1 Snip the end of the thumb off disposable glove.



- 2 Pull the rubber glove over the end of cardboard roll.



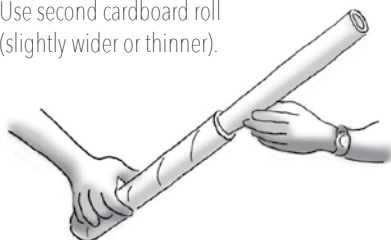
- 3 Put plastic tube into hole, in end of glove thumb (leaving a fingers-width from the top of tube and end of roll).



- 4 Use masking tape to hold glove and tube in place.



- 5 Use second cardboard roll (slightly wider or thinner).



Slide (like trombone) one tube into the other to change notes, while blowing into tube.



# Tin Can Banjo

## What you need...



Empty tin can  
(open at one end)

Fishing line  
(40cm approx.)



Metal nut  
or washer

Stick  
(15cm  
approx.)



Hammer

Nail

- 1 Make a hole in bottom of can using hammer and nail.



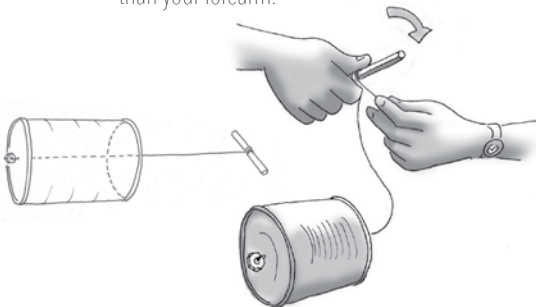
- 2 Thread a metal nut or washer onto end of fishing line and tie some knots.



- 3 Thread other end of line through hole in bottom of the tin can.



- 4 Tie other end of line to stick, and then wind it around a few times till line is slightly shorter than your forearm.



Careful not to cut yourself  
on inside top of tin can

- 5 Tuck the can under your arm (or between knees) make the line tight.



Strum the line with finger or thumb, tightening  
line for higher notes (loosening for lower notes).



# Leaf



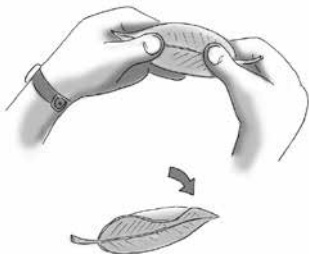
What you need...

A young soft leaf (gumleaf, coprosma, etc.)

## Method 1 - (Not as easy)

Hold each end of the leaf with fingers and thumbs. Stretch the leaf. Place the leaf against your lips with your upper lip gently pushing side of leaf over fingers. Blow downwards till note comes. Tighten leaf to change pitch.

1



2



## Method 2 - (Easier)

- 1 Roll leaf long its spine. Pinch edge of leaf near stem end with thumb and finger (making sure it doesn't split).
- 2 Pinch other end of leaf flat and stretch leaf tight.

- 3 Put the stem end of leaf into mouth and blow slowly. Bend leaf to change note.



# Paper & Comb



What you need...



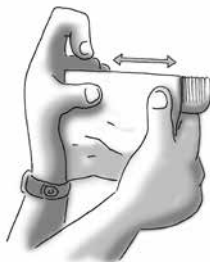
Hair comb

Thin paper  
(baking paper is fine)

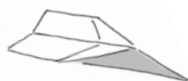
1 Fold paper over the teeth-edge of the comb.



2 Stretch the paper across the comb, holding firmly with fingers and thumbs.



3 Pucker and press your lips lightly onto paper and comb. Hum any song you like! (Your lips should tickle with the vibration)





# Kazoo & Blue Blowing

What you need...



Cup



Tin can  
(open both ends)



Kazoo



Oil funnel (or horn)

## Kazoo & Funnel

- 1 Clean the funnel.  
Put kazoo in end of funnel.



- 2 Hum a melody into kazoo!



## Blue Blowing

- 1 Put the cup to the side of your mouth.



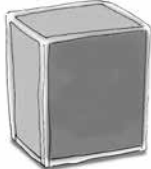
- 2 Sing into cup as you move hand over cup.  
(Another way of blue blowing is to use open-ended can on the front of the mouth, sing and use your hand to mute.)





# Box Bass

What you need...



Tea chest or  
wash tub or  
bucket or box



Nylon cord  
or string  
(1.5m approx.)



Hammer  
and nail



Broomstick or  
pole (optional  
bottle top)

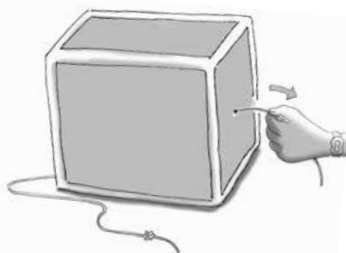
1 Hammer hole into  
middle of base of box.



2 Tie several knots into  
one end of cord.



3 Thread cord through hole  
at base of box.



4 Place pole at corner of  
box. Tie chord around  
pole so that it is tight  
where pole leans  
directly over hole (if pole  
slips, nail a bottle top  
in corner to hold in place).



Put one foot on box (other on ground). Pull pole back to tighten cord  
(holding onto knot and cord) Pluck away! (Change pitch by tightening etc.)

# Spoons

What you need...



Two metal spoons  
(soup spoons are fine)

- 1 Curl your hand into a loose fist. Place the handle of the first spoon between your thumb and first finger (facing up). Hold the second spoon between the first and second fingers (facing down). The spoons should be back-to-back but slightly apart. Hold them firmly.



- 2 Swing the spoons down and gently hit the front of your leg.



- 3 Bring the spoons up to your other hand (which is flat and still, palm down).



- 4 Change the rhythm by not always hitting flat hand and/or hitting other parts of the body. Maybe sometimes sliding spoons between the other fingers to get ratchet effect.



# Jug & Bottle

What you need...



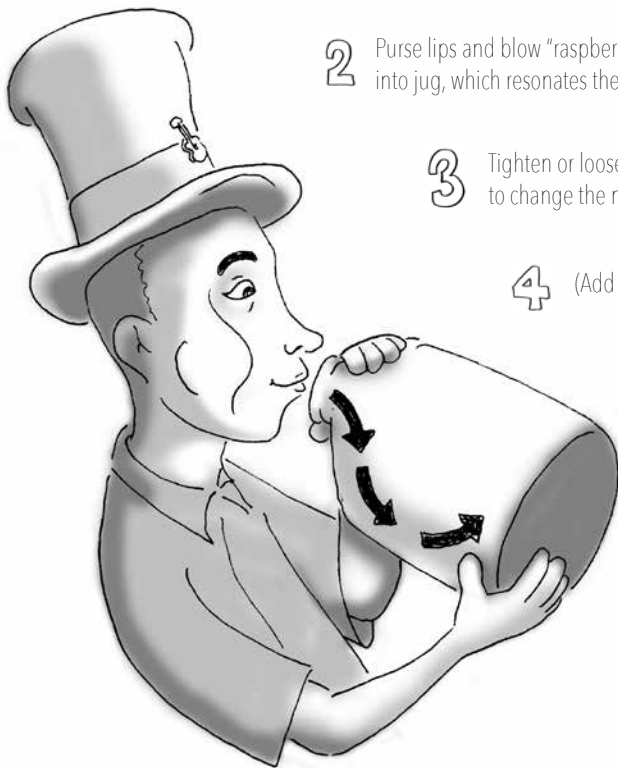
Earthenware jug or various glass or plastic bottles

1 Hold jug/bottle a few centimetres from mouth.

2 Purse lips and blow "raspberry's" into jug, which resonates the note.

3 Tighten or loosen lips to change the note.

4 (Add voice to add more tone).



# Handsaw



Not suitable  
for children

## What you need...



### Long blade saw

To select saw for playing, test by bending in "S" shape (Figure 4) and tap with metal e.g., keys. If it rings it will play (not all saws can be played).



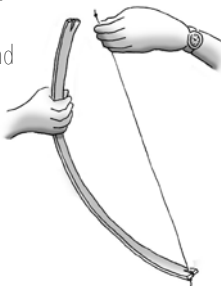
Nylon cord  
(60cm approx.)



length of flexible wood Box  
of violin rosin  
(Cello or violin bow optional)

**!WARNING! Saw is sharp!**

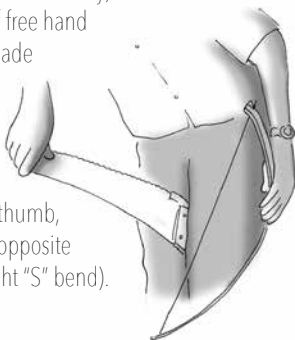
- 1 Tie knots in either end of cord. Cut slots in either end of wood. Bend wood and slot cord in.



- 2 Cord should be taut with tension. Rub rosin on cord of bow (can work without but better with rosin).



- 3 Sitting or standing with legs together, put saw between knees or lower thighs (teeth of saw facing towards body). Use open of free hand on end of blade – bend saw over leg a little and then with strong thumb, bend it up (opposite way in a slight "S" bend).



- 4 Draw bow across flat edge of blade (not teeth), making sure bow is perpendicular to edge of saw (and crossing blade at main bend). Experiment with placement of bow and follow changing bend of saw to create pitch.



# Shakers

What you need...



Tin with sealable lid  
or plastic fruit jar.



Rice (uncooked)

- 1 Open container and pour rice  
(about one third of containers  
volume) into it.



- 2 Seal container.



- 3 Shake container.



- 4 Experiment with different rhythms!



# Newspaper

What you need... Newspaper

- 1 Look like you're reading the newspaper.



- 2 Tear paper in strips in a rhythmic way (a bit like a DJ scratching a record)

Note: Make sure you tear with the grain of the paper (Broad sheets - along its length and tabloids - along its width).



# Bottle Top Lagerphone



Not suitable  
for children  
to make

What you need...



Wooden dowel or pole  
(1.5m approx.)



Hand saw



At least 40 metal  
bottle tops



Screws and nails



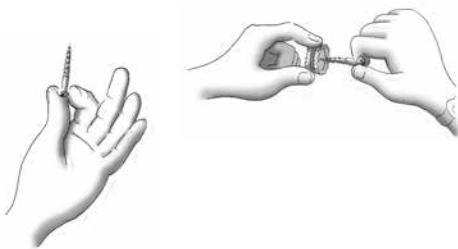
Screwdriver

**!WARNING! Saw is sharp!**

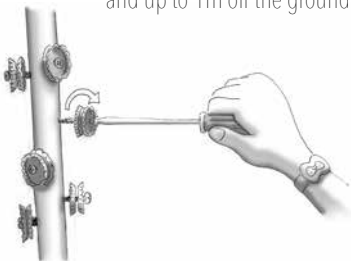
- 1 Place tops back to back and hammer large nail through the middle (repeat as many times you have tops).



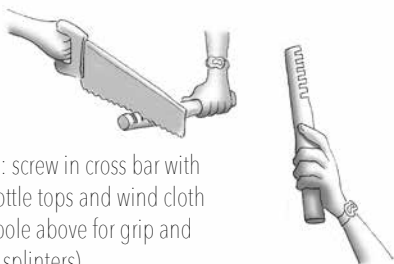
- 2 Put screw through doubled tops.



- 3 Screw doubled tops into dowel/pole, a few cm apart all around and up to 1m off the ground



- 4 Cut slots (12 approx.) into one end of axe handle/dowel.



(optional: screw in cross bar with added bottle tops and wind cloth tape on pole above for grip and avoiding splinters).



To play stomp pole up and down while sliding grooved handle horizontally  
(Add rhythms by also hitting crossbar with handle).



# Tin Lid Whistle

What you need...

Not suitable  
for children  
(tin lid edges  
sharp)



Tin lid



Hammer & nail



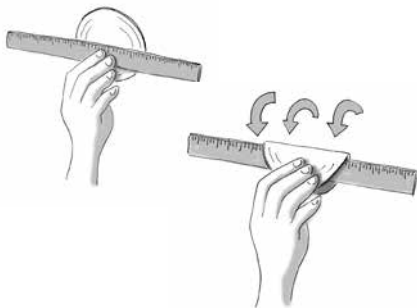
Ruler



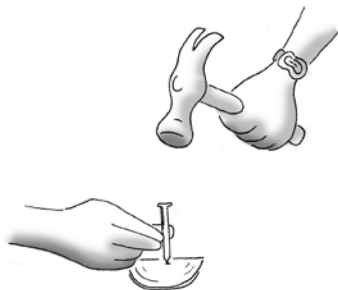
- 1 Remove lid from can with opener.



- 2 Fold lid in middle over ruler (in half).



- 3 Hammer hole about 1cm from folded edge through both sides.



- 4 Carefully open up edges like a taco shell (edges very sharp!)



Edges very sharp!



Put lips over folded edge and hole, then blow into hole till it whistles (you can change note by moving tongue forwards and backwards in mouth.)

# Plastic Cup Chicken

What you need...



Plastic cup



Self tapper or screw



Metal washer



Scissors



Sponge



String (60cm approx.)

- 1 Press self-tapper/screw into bottom of cup and turn till a hole is formed.

- 2 Tie washer to end of string and thread string through hole (from bottom end).



- 3 Tie sponge to other end and wet sponge and string. Grip string tightly with damp sponge at opening of cup.



- 4 Slide tight sponge along taut string (short jerks or slide make "bok bok" noise. Long slides make "Squawks").



# Garbage Bag

What you need...

Large plastic garbage bag

- 1 Tie single knots in either end of bag.



- 2 Hold bag horizontally and loose. Pull tight and then loose etc. making percussive rhythms. Experiment!



# Cardboard Tube Thunder and Lightning



Not suitable  
for children  
to make

**!WARNING! Saw is sharp!**

## What you need...



Short bolt and wing nut  
with two washers and  
screw (same width)



Post pack or cardboard  
cylinder (approx. 10x35cm)



Handsaw



Scissors



Long, thin door spring  
(at least 30 cm long)



Thin, hard plastic sheet  
(at least 10cm diameter)



Hammer  
& nail



Contact glue



Ruler

- 1** (Optional) Mark 10cm ellipse and cut at end of cylinder with saw.



- 2** Cut out plastic to same size as end of cylinder. Make hole with nail in the middle, widen hole with screw (same width as bolt).



- 3** Thread bolt and wing nut through hole (with washers on either side of plastic).



- 4** Bend end of spring around bolt and fasten nut onto spring. Glue plastic on end of cylinder and wait till dry.



- 5** Hold cylinder vertically with spring hanging off bottom end. Wobble cylinder for thunder and lightning effects.

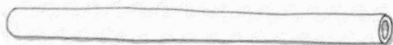




# Plastic Pipe Digeridoo

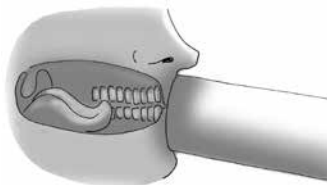
Not as easy to play

## What you need...

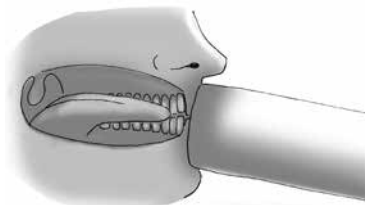


Plastic PVC polypipe (plumbing: approx. 1mx4cm) Can be cut to pitch or key (i.e.. C or D)

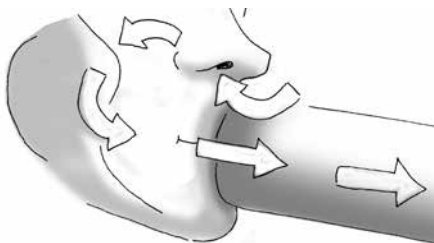
- 1 Blow and vibrate pursed lips (Raspberry) to front or side, into pipe to make basic note.



- 2 Move tongue backwards and forwards in mouth to make "ee aw" sound. Now make rhythm words by tonguing either "didjamor didjamor" etc. or "didgeridoo didgeridoo" etc.



- 3 To make a continual sound without stopping for breath we must CIRCULAR BREATHE. This takes a lot of practice. My indigenous teacher told me as I count to eight, suck in air with my nose as I push out air with the other side of my puffed out cheek. If you practice this over and over into the didge to a count and combine it with your rhythm word, it sounds continuous.



When you master step three then at the same time as everything else add animal/bird noises like dingo, kookaburra, crow etc. with your voice. If you blow really hard you can get a loud overblow about an octave above your basic note.

# Plastic Pipe Xylophones

and Shoe (Thongaphone)



Not suitable  
for children  
to make

**!WARNING! Saw is sharp!**

What you need...



Hand saw



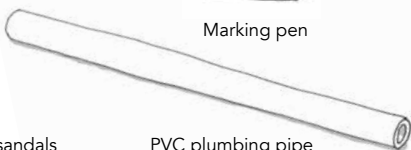
Two thick elastic straps  
(1m each approx.)



Thongs or rubber sandals  
(Or drumstick mallet optional)



Marking pen



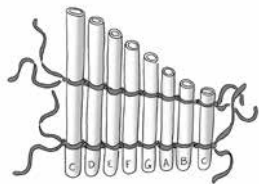
PVC plumbing pipe  
(4cm diameter x 352cm)

1

Cut pipe with saw into eight pieces  
LENGTHS: Low C = 62cm, D = 56cm,  
E = 49cm, F = 46cm, G = 41cm,  
A = 36cm, B = 32cm, High C = 30cm.

2

Loop and tie both elastic straps from  
top to bottom. Hang pipes from  
suitable position.



Arrange pipes from big to small and  
mark notes on pipe with pen.

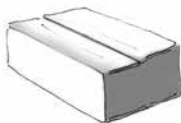
3

Slap thongs or sandals on end of each cut  
pipe to play a selected melody.  
Experiment with thinner postal pipes and  
drum mallets or sticks.



# Cardboard Box

What you need...



Cardboard box (about 30x20x20cm)  
or small hard suitcase.

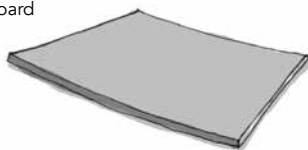


Firmly hold box under forearm, freeing hands for playing.  
Use one hand to tap use the other to roll thumb and fingers.  
Experiment with rhythms!

# Wobble Board

## What you need...

Masonite, plastic or flexible board  
(approx. 80x80cm)

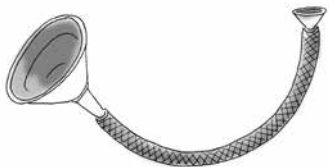


1 Put hands on either side  
and hold board.

2 Wobble the board forwards  
and backwards, creating a steady  
deep rhythm sound.



# Garden Hose Trumpet



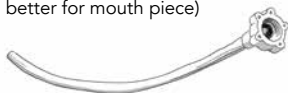
## What you need...

Hose length  
(1m approximately)



Liquid funnel  
(12cm diameter  
approximately)

Or cut down small funnel  
(or tap-end hose fitting even  
better for mouth piece)



1 Push bigger funnel in one end of hose and cut down funnel (or tap-end hose fitting) in the other.

2 Press mouth over small end, purse lips and blow tight "raspberry" (change note by tightness of lips - Very loud!)



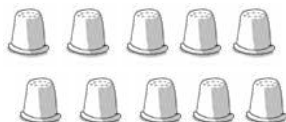
# Washboard

Colanders and Kitchen Sink

What you need...



Washboard or flat colander  
or kitchen sink



Eight to ten thimbles to fit fingers  
or two hard scrubbing brushes



Generally I tap with one hand and slide up the corrugations with the other. This changed according to the music. You can sit with it on your lap or stand with it on your chest using a strap to hand it around neck (you can add pots, pans, hooters etc. for percussive effects and colour)



# Tuned Bottles and Glasses

## What you need...

Funnel



Eight glass  
bottles or  
wine glasses



Water



Chopstick or metal rod  
to use as a mallet

## Bottles

- 1 Pour water through funnel into bottles at gradually ascending levels. Experiment with levels till you get an octave (mark the different notes).



- 2 Tap different bottles to play selected melodies.



## Glasses

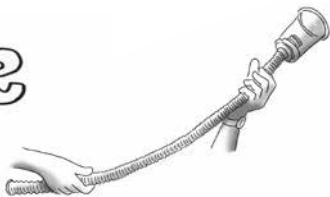
- 1 Pour water at different levels (ascending till you get an octave). Tap lightly with stick or rod.



- 2 Hold base of glass with other hand, run wet finger around top edge of wine glass and it rings, it sings!



# Whirly Hose Pipe and Plastic Cup



What you need...



Flexible plastic (corrugated)  
hose pipe (about 1m long by 3cm)



Masking tape



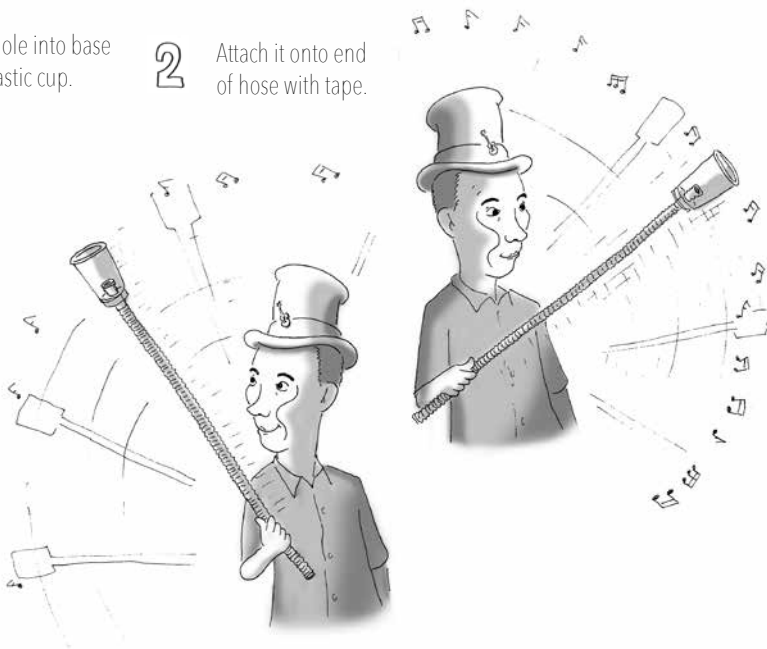
Scissors



Plastic cup

1 Cut hole into base  
of plastic cup.

2 Attach it onto end  
of hose with tape.



Making sure you don't hit anyone or anything, swing it around in a circle, holding the opposite end from cup. The faster you spin it, the higher the note. Experiment! (Note: cup not always necessary)

# Teapot Whistle



Not suitable  
for children  
to make

**!WARNING! Hacksaw is sharp!**

## What you need...



Small single cup metal



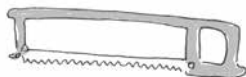
Contact glue



Small piece of wood



Water



Hacksaw

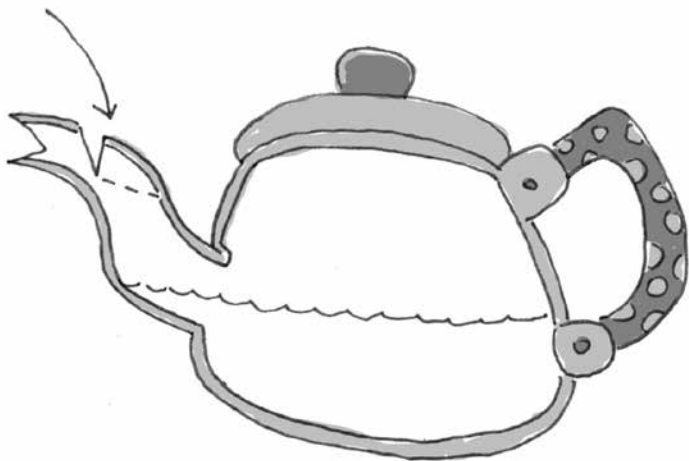
1 Cut a "V" shape into top bend of teapot spout with saw.

2 Cut and fit small piece of wood behind "V" cut in spout, that is round at top to fit top of spout and flat on the bottom.

3 Glue wood piece in.



4 Pour water into teapot till just base of spout.



Blow into end of spout and tilt teapot till it whistles like a bird.