



## Nature Play: Whittling

**It can be fun to sit quietly and whittle a stick.**

Children can whittle using potato/carrot peelers. This can help them learn the skills and work on safety precautions before branching out to a real knife. When they work with wood, children learn how to assess the risks of whittling, to keep themselves and others safe. They are also able to explore the properties of wood, about the difference between bark and the soft layers of wood underneath.

**Guiding Questions:** What can we make using things we find in the wild? How can we change a stick into something else? What could we change it into? Do we need to change it into something, or can learning a skill be enough? What tools do we need? What tools (or toys) can we make? What skills can we develop?

**NOTE for Grownups:** it is fun to do these activities with your children but remember, when they (not you) lead the activity they learn problem-solving skills and gain confidence.

### **You will need:**

Potato peeler or sharp knife. A stick or piece of soft wood (a bar of soap can substitute for a piece of wood for your first try). **Adult Supervision Required.**

### **What to do:**

Review safety procedures required for working with tools: 1) Require that everyone sit down with the stick resting on the ground and pointed away from themselves when carving. 2) Remember never to point the stick or tools at other people. 3) All cutting strokes go away from you and from the top of the stick to the bottom. 4) Always keep your eyes on what you are doing. If you need to look away, put the knife/potato peeler away first.

- Find a stick and practice shaping it. A good first stick is about 6 to 12 inches long and fairly soft. It should be fairly straight and not have a lot of branches or nubs sticking off it.
- Get familiar with your tools. Practice a few simple shallow cuts to shape the stick.
- Choose a project: remove the bark from your stick, create a flat place for your thumb, cut grooves for your fingers, give it a point, or hollow out the stick to make a tube.
- Once you're comfortable with using your blade, start a more involved project: building blocks, a whistle or recorder, a small bottle or beads.
- Work your way up to making figures, dolls or animals. What else can you make?

### **Resources:**

<https://rachelmclary.com/2017/09/08/whittling-and-knife-skills-with-kids/>

<https://imcrempsblog.com/2012/08/09/wood-whittling-a-treasured-past-time-and-a-perfect-project-for-kids/>

<https://www.artofmanliness.com/articles/a-beginners-guide-to-whittling/>

<http://richardirvine.co.uk/2017/01/elder1/>

<https://www.getoutwiththekids.co.uk/camping/camping-tips/whittling-teaching-kids-outdoor-knife-skills/>

<http://mairtownkindy.blogspot.com/2013/11/introducing-whittling-into-nature.html>

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Images from the web

