

How to make a guiro

A guiro is a Latin instrument that is used in the rhythm section of the band. It is a scraped hollowed out gourd with indefinite pitch. It's unique sound adds color and flavor to the ensemble. This instrument is a cinch to make.



Materials: A dried out gourd (longer than it is wide. This can really be of any shape you want, but it is traditionally the shape of a cucumber, but a little bigger.)

Wood Stain

Wire coat hanger.

Electric drill

Hack saw

Wood file

1. Cut the end off of the gourd and clean out the insides. The dried seeds and much of the pulp will come out easily. Fill the gourd with water and let it soak for a few hours, the remaining pulp will scrape out easily. A grapefruit spoon is a good tool for scraping. Or, you could use a long barbeque fork to get deep inside the gourd.
2. Hold the gourd with the open end pointing away from you and decide which side you want to be the top. Then decide where you want the holes for your fingers to

go on the bottom of the gourd. They'll probably fit best in the middle of the gourd underside just about three inches apart, one in front of the other, maybe slightly off sides of the center line for easier grip. Mark these spots with a pencil and then drill small holes. Use a round wood file to enlarge the holes big enough for your fingers. The sides of the gourd are usually pretty sturdy, but be careful not to file so aggressively that you break the walls of the gourd.

3. Stain the outside of the gourd with the color of your choice. Shoe polish works as well. If you are going to paint or decorate your gourd on top of the stain, make sure you pick a light enough color.

4. Use the hack saw to cut parallel lines on the top of the guiro. The lines should be spaced about one half inch apart. The lines should start about a third of the way from the back of the gourd and go almost to the open end. These lines, of course, go across the width of the gourd, not the long way, so you can scrape toward the open end.

5. Use the round wood file to file the cuts into deeper grooves. Check the thickness of the gourd wall and don't go too deep! Just deep enough to create a good rasping sound.

6. Now you can decorate the gourd. It can be decorated elaborately into crazy creatures or beautiful works of art. You may choose to leave it plain or add some simple designs.

7. Cut one shoulder off of a wire coat hanger, this will give you a V-shaped scraper about 8 inches long. You can scrape the guiro with just about any thin stick-like object, but the metal scraper produces a louder more aggressive sound.

8. Play and enjoy!