

Learning in the Leaves

Heat Sources – Fire Bow



1. Find a bow shaped stick that is about 12–15 inches (30.5–38.1 cm) long from tip to tip.
2. Find a length of cord that is slightly longer than the Bow. Synthetic cord is the most suitable for this task, especially if you're new to the art of Friction Fire. 550 Parachute cord is commonly used due to its overall durability and resistance to wear. Other suitable options include: shoe lace, the roots and bark of certain trees, reverse wrapped plant fibers, and long strips of clothing that have either been braided or reversed wrapped.
3. Find a piece of wood that is strong and suitable for drilling. Hardwood is excellent, such as cedar, hemlock or oak. If you use a soft wood it will last a shorter time, although it will be easier to make a fire. It should be something you can hold down with your foot while kneeling. This will be what you drill into to make the ember that will start the fire. Make a small notch in the piece of wood where your drill piece can go. This drill piece is called the firebird.
4. Use a 12-15 in. stick that is almost perfectly straight for the drill piece. Taking the bark off is better, but leaving it on is okay, if you lack a knife.
5. Get something to hold down the drill while you are spinning it with the bow. The best thing to use is a fist sized rock with a small hole drilled into it from a harder rock, this is called a top rock. The hole is used to hold your spindle in place.
6. String your bow. Make sure the bow is not tight, but don't allow very much slack either. The string should not rebound if plucked.
7. Prepare a tinder bundle and some kindling before you begin drilling. A tinder bundle is a fine bundle of tinder, which can be found from poplar trees on the inner layer of bark. Other materials will work, such as dry grass. The tinder bundle should resemble a birds nest. Your kindling should be smaller than a standard pencil.
8. Put the string around the spindle. This should make the string much tighter. Finally, to make the ember, vigorously spin the drill on the piece of wood by moving the bow back and forth. Use your top rock to hold down the drill and keep it in place.
9. Continue doing this until you see a small glowing ember in the wood. If it starts to smoke, do not stop. It will smoke before an ember is created.
10. Blow on it lightly to make the ember grow. BE CAREFUL! Blowing even slightly hard will disperse the punk, or the hot sawdust, ruining the ember. Then scoop the ember into the tinder bundle and blow into flame. Add kindling and work your way up to larger sticks.