

# How to Make Fire Sticks

## Survival Topics Firesteels

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Because fire is so important to survival, it is always a good idea to have a fire starting aid in your survival kit. To this end many of us carry what is known as a “fire stick” as part of our standard survival gear.

In this article I will show you how to make your own fire sticks at home using commonly available materials.

## Why Carry Fire Sticks?

Lightweight and waterproof, a fire stick can help kindle a blaze in even the worst conditions.

If you need to build a fire in a hurry, for example if you fall into a stream during cold weather, you can quickly gather combustible materials and use your firestick to start a fire even if the wood you are using is damp.

In fact, a properly made fire stick will burn even if it has been submerged in water. Anyone who has ever traveled in very wet conditions can appreciate the advantage to that.



Fire Stick

Even during non-emergency situations sometimes wood can be stubborn to kindle. A good firestick will burn for eight or ten minutes at least, providing plenty of heat to dry and ignite wet wood if used correctly.

Other uses for firesticks include being a quick source of heat. You could make a winter survival debris hut and light the firestick inside. By letting it burn completely before crawling in, the shelter would be pre-heated and much more comfortable.

## Buying Fire Sticks

You may have seen or even used the commercially available firesticks or firestarters. These are typically made of pressed wood particles and wax. Coghlan's markets these aids for "starting fires quickly and easily" in a variety of outdoor stores and online marketplaces.

## Making Firesticks

Because the formula for making fire sticks is so basic, you can easily make your own at home using commonly available materials. This should satisfy the do-it-yourselfer who enjoys making his own survival equipment.



Fire Stick Materials

What you will need:

Wax. Pretty much any candle wax will do. I like to recycle wax from leftover stubs and broken candles.

Corrugated cardboard.

String. Do not use man-made fibers as they often emit toxic fumes when burning. Cotton or other plant based fibers is what you want to use when making firestarters.

A double boiler to melt the wax in. If you do not have one you can easily make your own by using two pots of different sizes.

A means to cut the string.

A source of heat to melt the wax.

The most time consuming part of making firesticks is the melting of the wax but you can do this while working on the rest of the project.

Assuming you do not have a double boiler, make your own using two pots of different sizes. Partly fill the larger pot with water and put it onto your source of heat (stove, fire, or what have you). Next put your wax into the smaller pot and place it so that it is floating on the water in the larger pot. Put this combination on your source of heat so that as the water warms it melts the wax.



Homemade Fire Starters

While the wax is melting you can prepare the fire starters. First obtain a piece of corrugated cardboard, preferably without the backing on one side. If all you have is cardboard boxes you can easily remove the paper backing from one side using a pair of needle nose pliers or similar tool. This is what I did and it worked very well.

Then cut the cardboard into strips about six or seven inches long and two inches wide as shown in the picture. Roll these strips up and tie them with a natural fiber cord.

Carefully dip the cardboard rolls into the hot melted wax and let soak for several seconds. I like to use the pliers on my favorite survival tool, a Leatherman wave multi-tool, to hold the cardboard by the string as I dip it. Remember the wax is very hot and can burn you if it touches your skin.



Melting the Wax

Shake the cardboard a bit to help the wax penetrate into the spaces of the cardboard and then take out to cool.

Once cool the wax has hardened inside and around your home made firestarters you can quickly dip them into the hot wax again for an additional coating. This will cause your firestarters to burn even longer, though it possibly is not necessary and will add some extra weight.

## Testing the Homemade Fire Sticks

As a test I used a match to light one of the home made fire starters. It caught fire very easily and burned with hot flame from one end to the other over a period of about 9-minutes. This is plenty of time to dry out even wet kindling so that you can build a fire.

I recommend carrying two or three of your fire starting sticks in your survival kit wherever you go. Though you may have a great amount of firemaking experience, an extra margin of safety could very well save your life in an emergency.

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