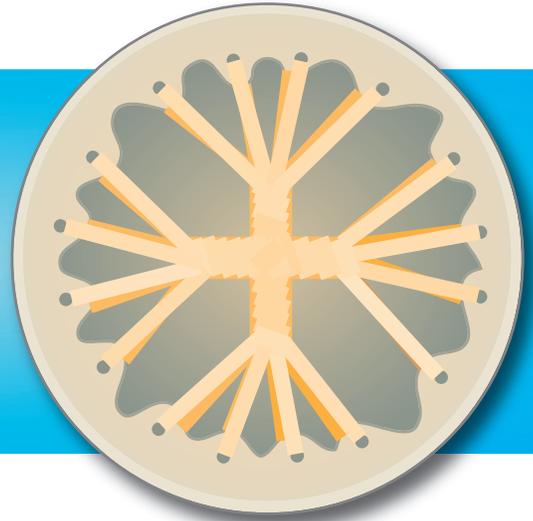


How to make a rawhide drum



Making your own frame drum can be very rewarding and only involves a moderate amount of crafting skills to accomplish. If you are a real beginner it may be best to get a frame drum kit. Good suppliers include Cedar Mountain drums, [/www.cedarmtndrums.com](http://www.cedarmtndrums.com) and Centralia Fur and Hide <http://www.furand-hide.com>.

Whether you choose a kit or assemble the supplies on your own, choose a hoop size that fits you well. Most people can use a 16-inch in diameter frame drum with relative ease. If you are slightly built or shorter in stature you might want a 13 or 14-inch hoop. If you are very tall or have longer arms, then you might want to scale up to a 18 or 20-inch frame. Whatever the diameter, choose a frame that is 3 to 4-inches deep.

Hoops also come in various different variety of woods and may be made from either plywood or from one solid piece that has been steam-bent into a circle or may be pieced to form a hexagonal or octagonal shape. Oak, maple, cedar and pine hoops are readily available.

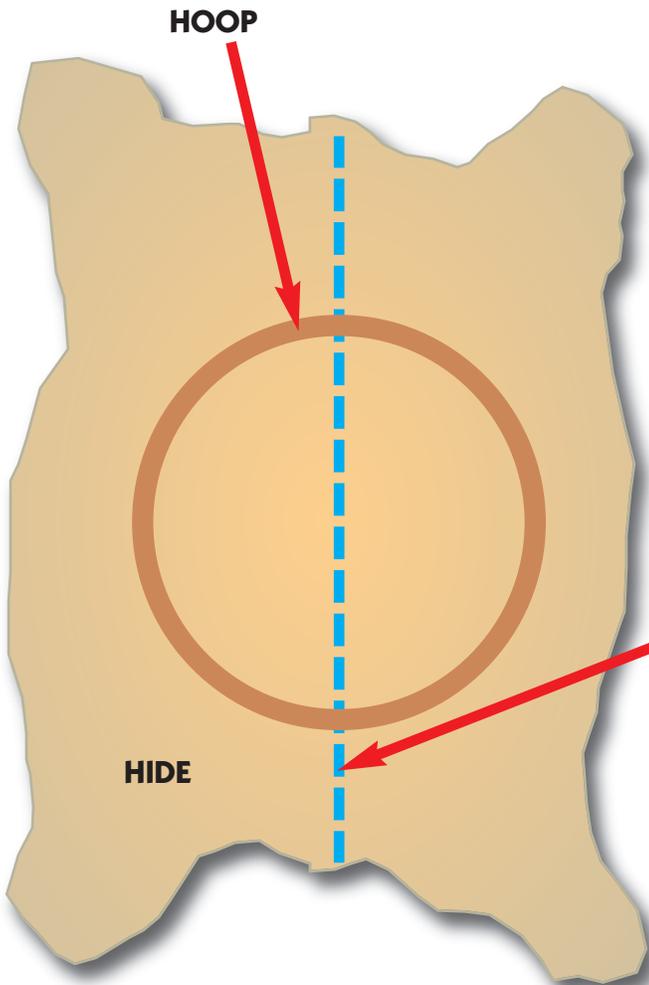
The surface of your drum will be of raw hide, that is an animal hide that has been dehaired, cleaned, stretched and dried but not tanned. Good hides to use for drums are deer, horse, reindeer, goat, steer, bear, buffalo and moose. The latter two require a bit more skill as they need to be stretched more tautly to sound right when finished. If you are using buffalo or moose, use a heavier plywood frame as it will more likely hold it's shape when the hide dries.

The day before you are going to make your drum, soak the rawhide overnight in cold water. Place weights on the hide to keep it submerged.

Gather your supplies:

- A yardstick
- A soft lead pencil
- A pair of heavy-duty scissors
- A bucket to keep hide pieces pliable while working on your drum
- A water-proof surface to work on or a plastic table cloth to protect your work surfaces from being damaged by the wet hide
- Wooden clothes pins
- Ball of twine
- Leather punch to make 3/8" holes
- Hammer
- Board to safely hammer holes without marring the table
- A piece of thin, soft leather or buckskin about two foot square (this is for making your drum stick head and for padding the drum's handles)
- A sturdy stick 14" long
- An old wool blanket that you can cut into pieces or quarter yard of heavy wool at least 36-inches wide
- White glue

This process will take you a few hours over two days so make sure you can be patient and not disturbed while you work.

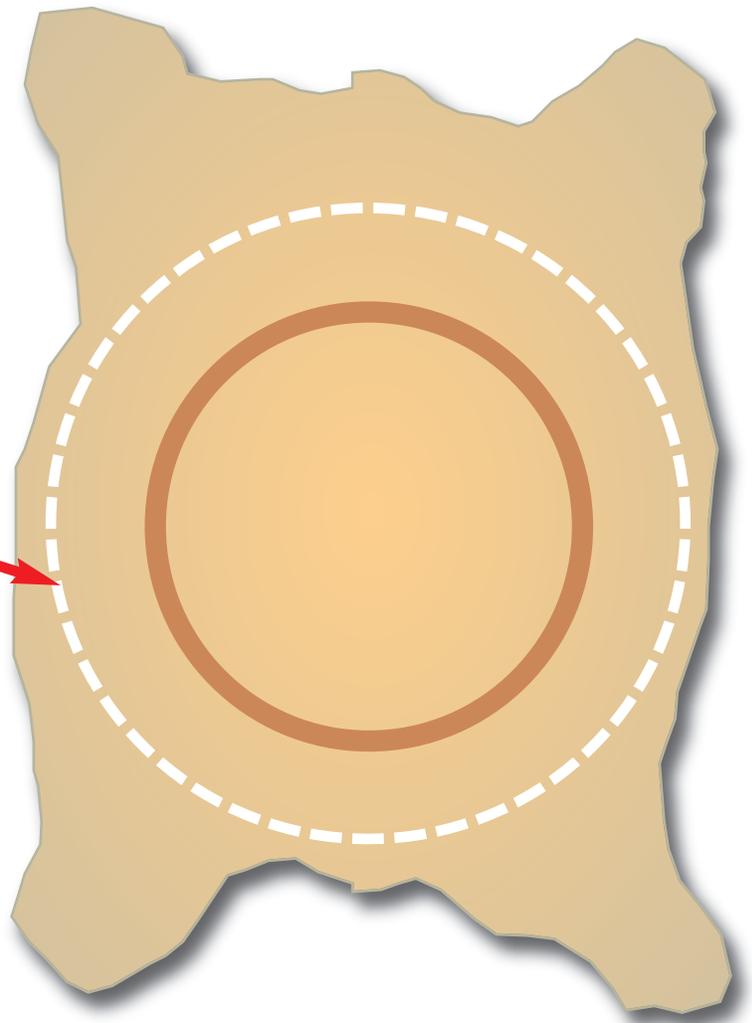


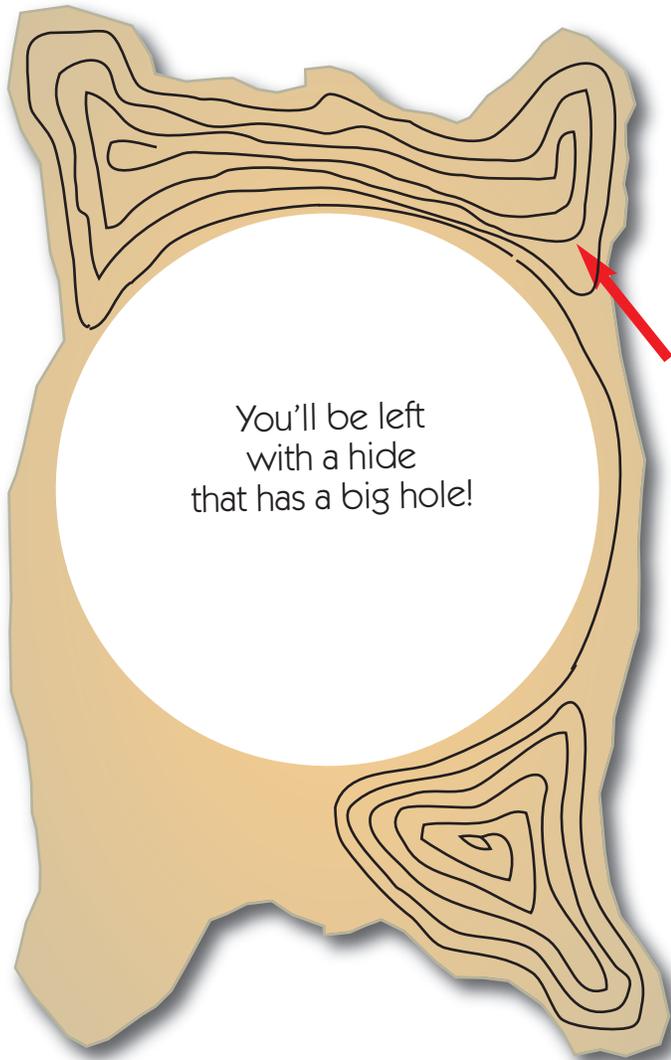
The hide you choose for the drum face must have a nice, hole-free area large enough to accommodate your hoop with about four to five inches extra all around. It is best if the drum is cut from the center of the hide so that the area that was over the animal's backbone will run down the center of the drum.

Place your hoop so that it is centered over the animal's backbone.

Trace an outline at least 4 to 5-inches beyond the hoop and cut along this line.

When you have the circle cut, place the round into the bucket to keep it pliable while you go on to the next step.





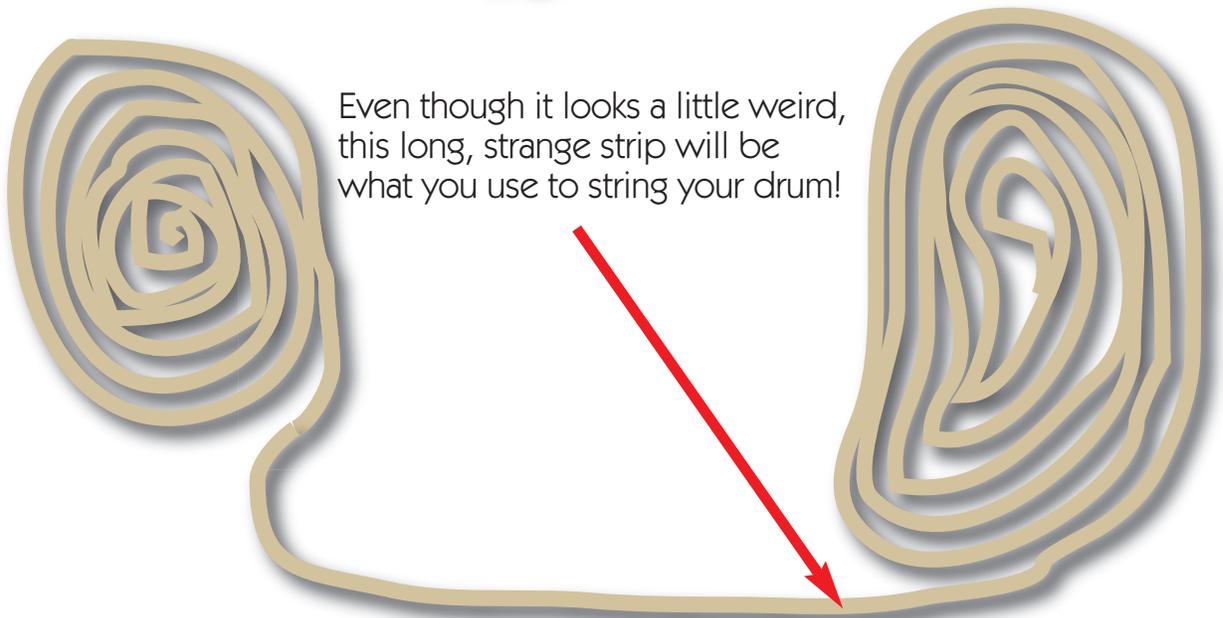
You'll be left
with a hide
that has a big hole!

CUT LINE

The remaining hide is now cut into one very long, CONTINUOUS strip that is 1/2" wide. This will become the "cord" for assembling your drum. Work your way all around the hide.

While this is time consuming, the more carefully you do this step, the nicer the finished drum will be!

When you have completed this step, put the resulting strip into the bucket of water with your drum round.

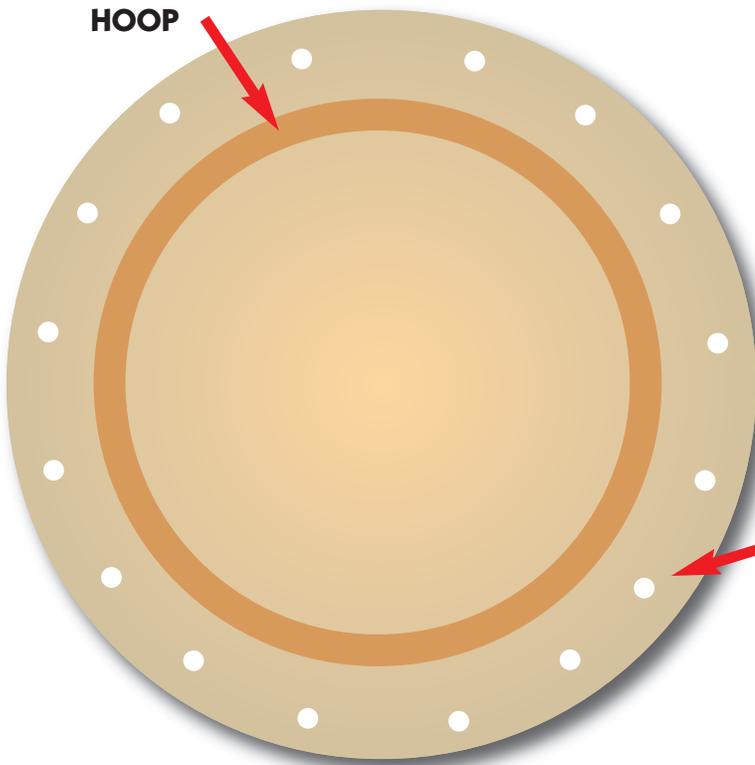


Even though it looks a little weird, this long, strange strip will be what you use to string your drum!

Now it's time to punch holes.

Put down your board for protecting the table. Place the hide on it face down. (The face is the smooth side) Now, use a soft pencil to mark places for 16 evenly spaced holes that are 3/4 to 1-inch from the edge of the circle.

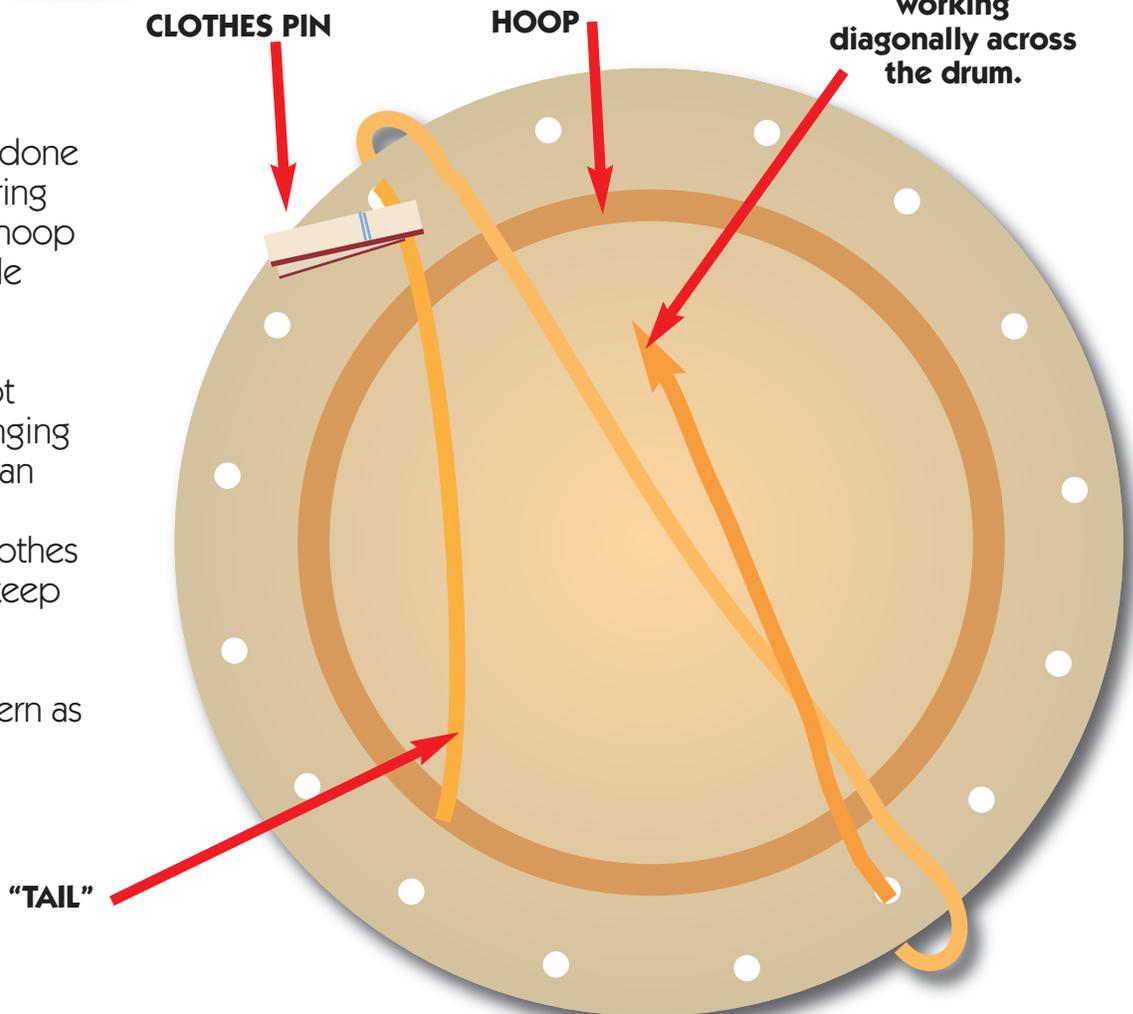
Carefully punch the holes using your punch and hammer while keeping the hide positioned on the board to protect your work surface.

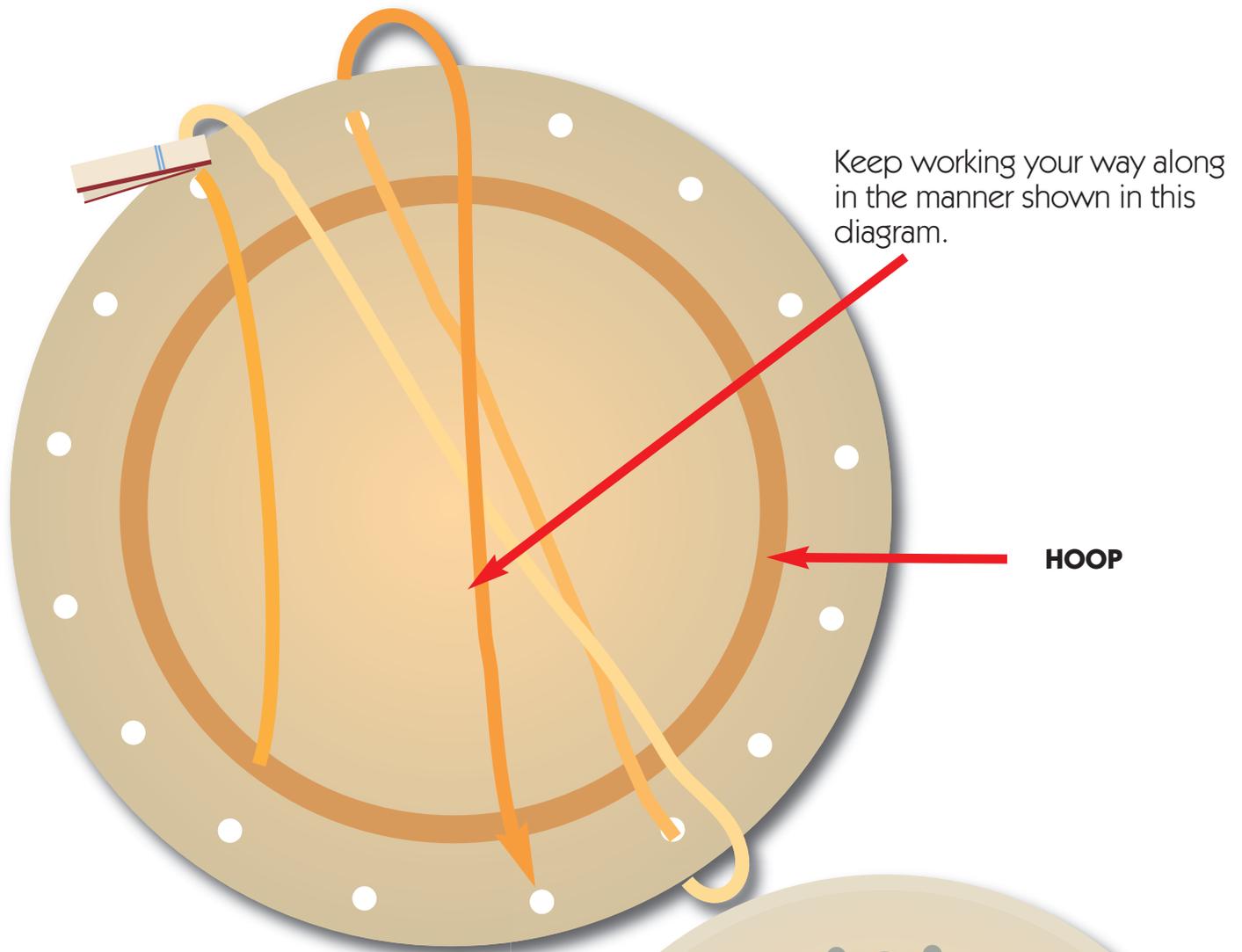


Thread the strip so that you are working diagonally across the drum.

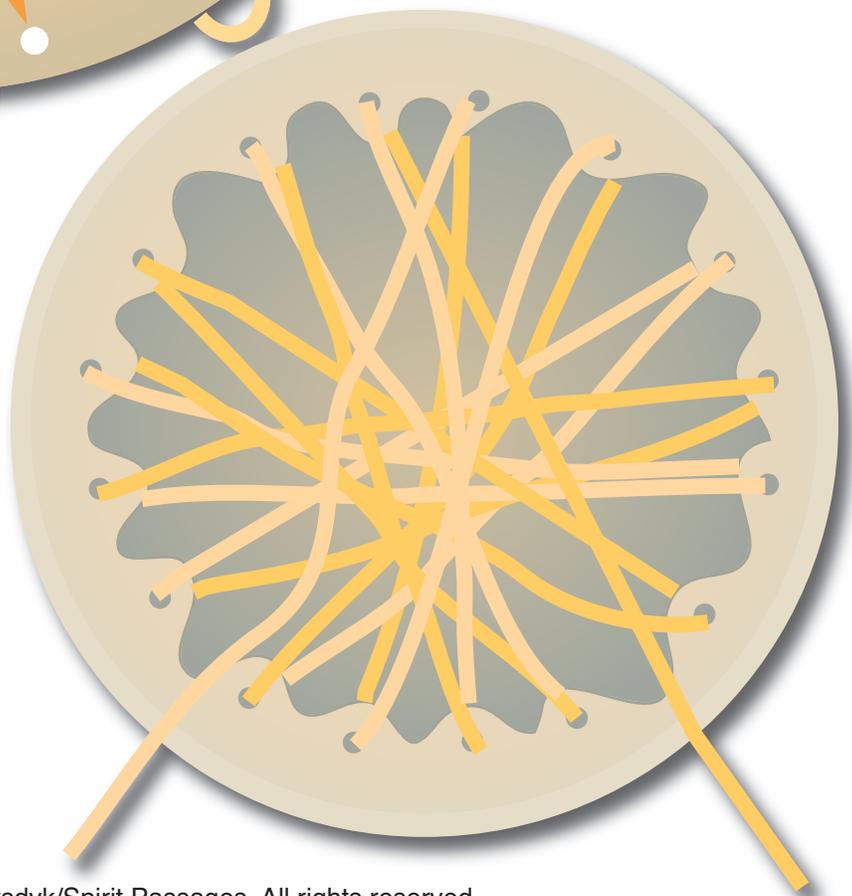
Once the holes are done you can begin to string the drum. With the hoop centered on the hide round, begin stringing across the drum. Leave a 2-foot "tail" of the strip hanging free where you began threading the strips through. Clamp a clothes pin over the tail to keep it in place.

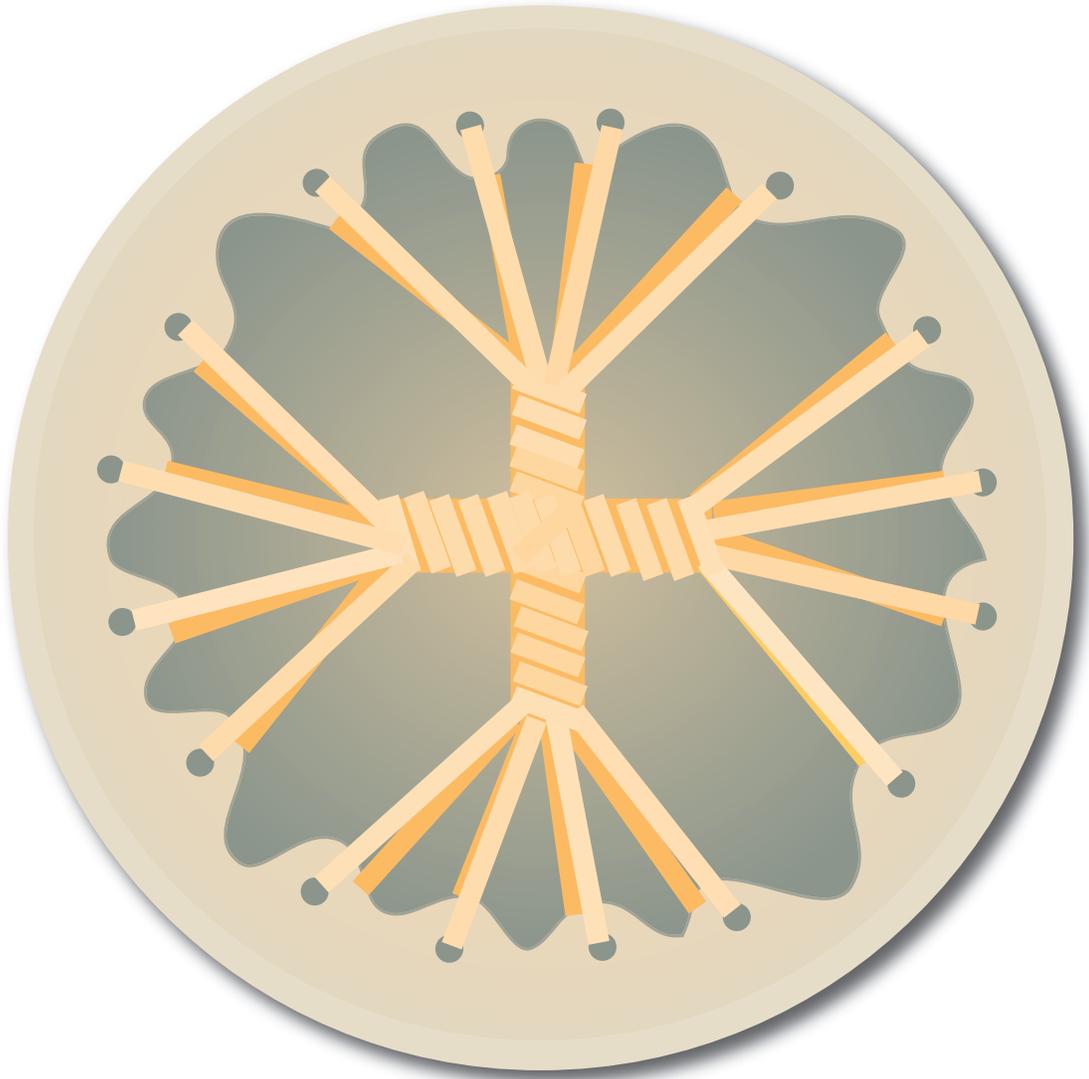
Keep the same pattern as you go along.





Once you have strung all the holes, you will have something that looks like this drawing. Now, remove the clothes pins and tighten the strips around the hide. Keep working them along until you have a tightened the drum head and have two very long "tail" strips hanging free.





Use the “tails” to separate the ties into bunches of four and wind the “tail” strips around the bundles to form a handle. Make this as smooth as you can and tie it tightly when you are finished. Tuck the cut ends under one of the wrappings as these cut ends can be sharp when the hide dries.

If any “pleats” or stand up when you are done, use the clothes pins again to flatten them out.

Now place the drum in a cool dry place to dry overnight. DO not place it near a fire or against a heat source and this can damage the drum!

While you wait for the drum to dry, you can work on your drum beater.

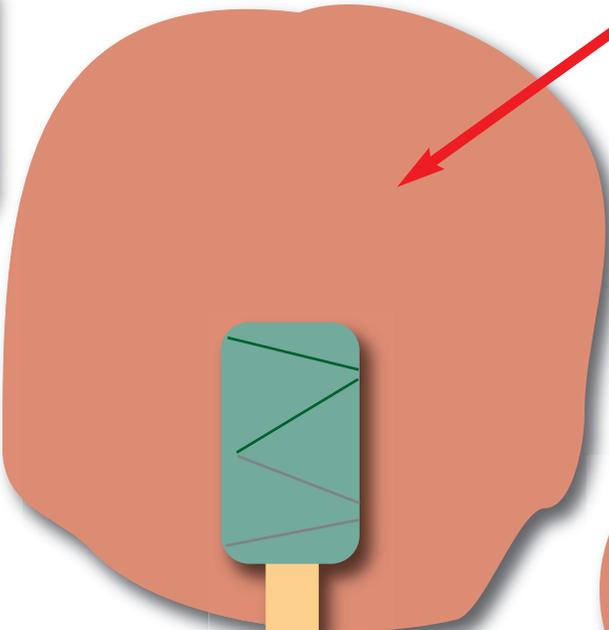
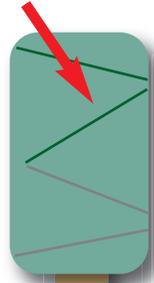


Cut a long triangle of blanket weight wool about three feet long and 3-inches at it's widest end.

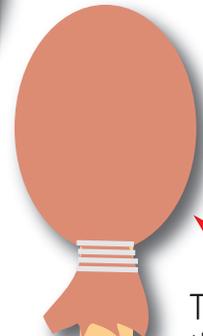
BLANKET WOOL



Glue the end to the stick. Keep about 1/2 inch of wool above the stick. Keep gluing and winding the wool until all of it is on the stick.

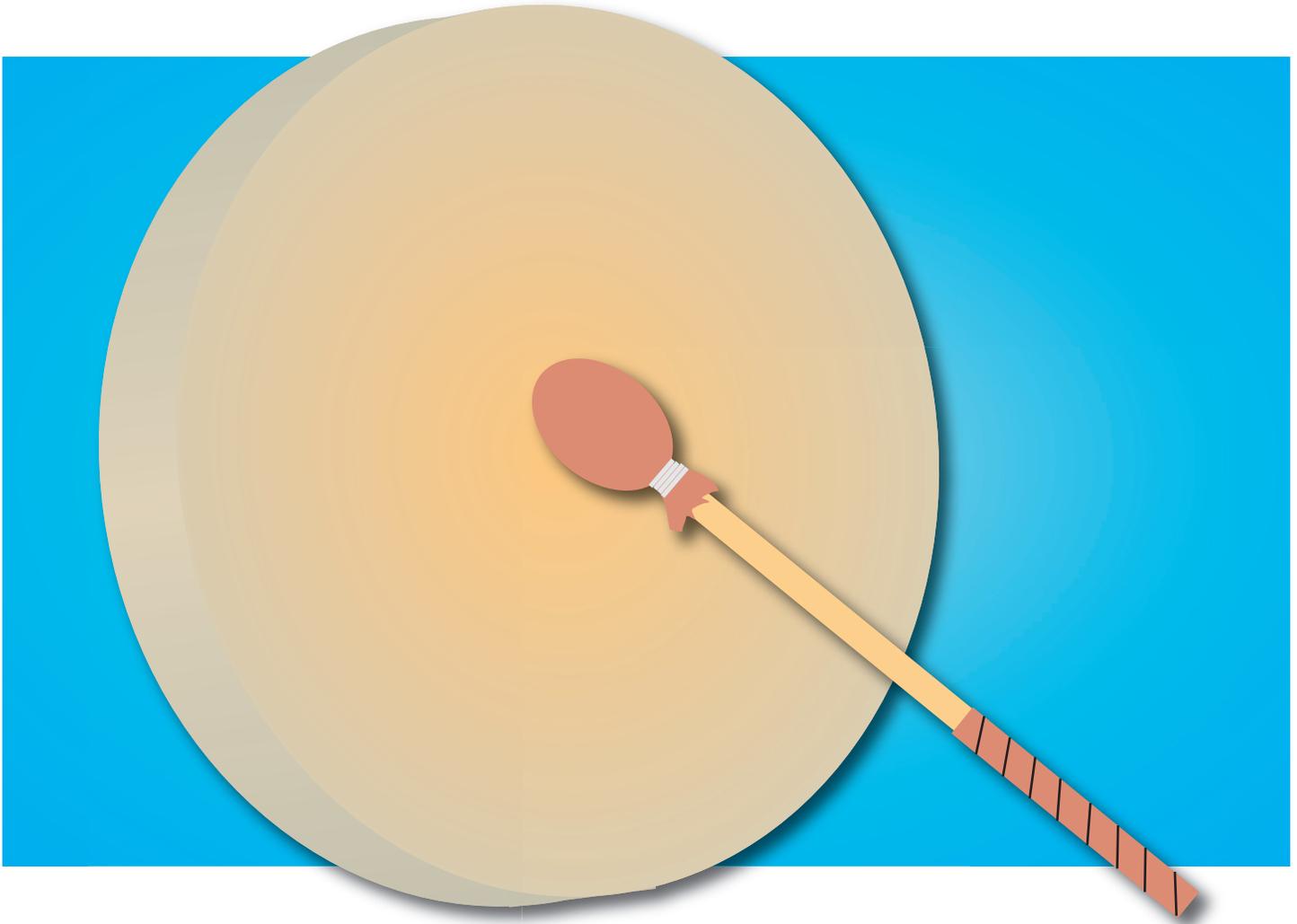


Cut a piece of soft leather to make a covering for the wool.



Tightly stretch the leather over the wool (scrunching down the wool above the stick) and secure well with tied twine.

You may also want to wind and glue soft leather to the bottom of the stick to create a nice handle.



Once your drum is dry, remove the clothes pins. Hold the drum close to your heart and let yourself connect with its spirit. Gently beat a heartbeat sound to awaken your drum.

When you feel ready, take a shamanic journey to begin empowering your drum. Meet your power animal or teacher and ask one of them to merge with you so they can empower the drum and beater.

When the teacher is done, thank them and return to ordinary reality. Your drum is now “alive.” Always store the drum in a safe, cool and dry place away from heat sources. Each year before the Autumn heating season, treat the hide with lanolin, bear oil or a leather dressing such as Lexol. If you live in a desert, treat the hide in Spring and Autumn to protect it well.



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