

Balloon Drums

Example of one of many music projects from Bart Hopkin's book, [Making Musical Instruments with Kids.](#)

Children can make good drums using balloon rubber for the drumhead. Balloon drums are not nearly as loud as drums with tightened heads of skin or plastic, but they do have an appealing, resonant drum tone.



MATERIALS

A mid-size tin can. 14-oz size (think Campbell's Soup) is about right.

Large balloons. It's good to have a few on hand in case one tears.

Rubber bands.

Two unsharpened pencils, chopsticks or similar lightweight sticks to use as beaters.

TOOLS

Can opener. If available, use the pop-off style can opener.

Scissors.

PROCEDURE

Remove the top and bottom of the can. Clean the can.

Optional: Remove the paper from the side of the can.

With scissors, snip the neck part off of the balloon.

Stretch the balloon over the top of the can. Pull it down far enough over the sides that the top stretches tight. If there's any slackness, pull it down tighter.

Put a collar of one or two rubber bands around the balloon to keep it from slipping. This will be easier for two children than one: one person holds the balloon in place, another puts the rubber band on. Alternative: use adhesive tape in place of rubber bands.

Optional: Add another balloon membrane to the opposite end of the can. This may make the drum a tiny bit louder, and it allows you to play on both sides if you want. You will not get two different notes

this way because the acoustic interaction of the two sides causes them to produce the same pitch.

PLAYING THE BALLOON DRUMS

Sit on a chair and hold the drum between your legs. Make sure that the bottom of the drum is not blocked.

The drums can be played with fingertips or with light beaters such as chopsticks or unsharpened pencils. Use a light, bounding-off technique rather than letting the stick or your fingers rest on the drum-head after hitting it.