



Homemade Noisemaker Activity

Activity Overview: How will you celebrate the new year? Noisemakers have been a popular party item over the past century. Make some noise for Iowa's 175th birthday and welcome the new year by creating a homemade noisemaker.

Connection to Iowa History

Iowans have celebrated the new year in many different ways over time. During the Victorian period, friends and families in Iowa would gather together to celebrate the new year with lavish dinners, open houses and small, quiet gatherings. One way to celebrate these new beginnings at Iowa parties was the use of noisemakers – which are objects intended to make a loud noise, usually for fun. This party favor became a popular item in the early 1900s.

Science Behind the Noisemaker

The sound of the noisemaker comes from the vibrations created as a person blows into the flattened straw. It works the same way a reeded instrument produces sound. The pointed slit and the flattened straw create a horn-like noise as the air pushes through the restricted air flow. For further experimentation, decrease or lengthen the straw length to create different pitches of sound.

Instructions *(step-by-step photos on next page)*

- 1. Flatten.** Choose a straw and flatten it completely by pressing it down with your fingers.
- 2. Cut.** Take one end of the straw and squeeze the flat part tightly together. Find the center of the flattened end and make two ½ inch angled cuts outward from the center point. It should resemble an arrow point after the cuts are made.
- 3. Decorate.** Using colored pencils, markers, crayons, or other decorative materials, decorate one side of the full sheet (9x12) construction paper. This is the outside of the noisemaker.
- 4. Place.** Lay down the decorated side of the construction paper on a flat surface. Place the straw on top of the left edge of the paper and leave about ¼ of the pointed end of the straw off the paper.
- 5. Roll.** Start to roll into a cone shape around the straw. The end of the cone should be tight around the straw and the open side should be wider than the straw side.
- 6. Secure.** Wrap tape around the location of where the construction paper and straw are tightly connected with the pointed end out of the cone. This should be secure and tight.
- 7. Cut.** Using your hands, lightly flatten the open end of the cone. Cut the paper to create a straight edge at the end of the cone.

Materials

- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Straw
- Tape
- Glue
- Colored pencils, markers, crayons, etc.

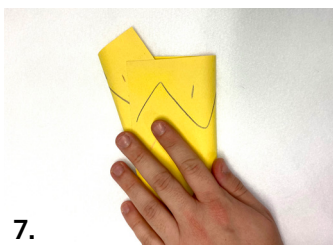
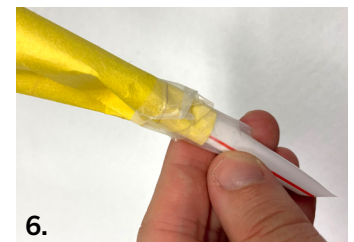
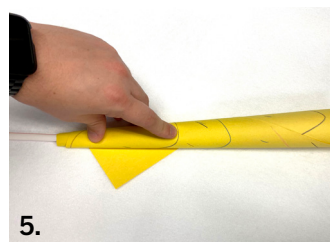
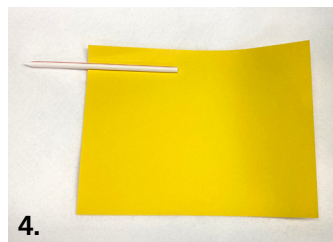
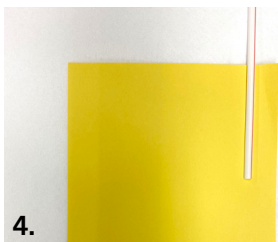
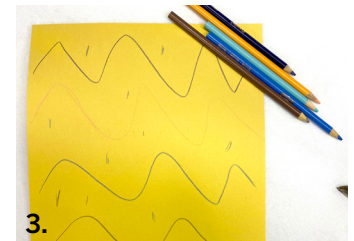
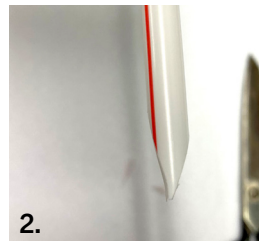
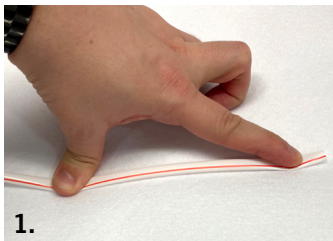
Instructions continued on next page

Homemade Noisemaker Activity

Instructions continued

8. **Blow.** Pressing your lips tightly, blow into the pointed end of the straw to create sound. The points should be vertical to create a buzzing noise.
9. **Share.** If you would like to share your creation with the State Historical Museum of Iowa, please email photos to museum.education@iowa.gov. We want to share your creation with other young historians!
10. **Questions to Spark Learning**
 - Noisemakers are typically used during celebrations such as birthdays. Do you have any special items, like a noisemaker, you use for special occasions?
 - Communities in Iowa have town celebrations, such as Pufferbilly Days in Boone and Tulip Time in Pella. Does your community have any special celebrations? If so, what do you enjoy about those festivities?
 - The noisemaker works just like a reeded instrument. Do you play any instruments? If so, what do you play and how does it make noise?

Follow these step-by-step photos to help create the noisemaker.



11. Additional Resources

- [State Historical Museum of Iowa: Noisemaker Object](#)
- [Langley Hyde: How did the Victorians celebrate New Year's?](#)
- [History.com: History of New Years](#)
- [St. Louis Public Radio: Collecting in the Heartland - Halloween Noisemakers](#)