



Make Your Own Colonial “Whirligig” Toy



From antiquity, people have used their imagination and common materials to invent toys, many of them being active, kid-powered, and noise making (just like this whirligig). While we will probably never know who invented the first whirligig, evidence suggests this type of toy was independently invented and played with by children on several continents. Simple whirling toys such as the whirligig are described in European literature as early as the 17th Century, and would have been as popular in Colonial America as they were in Europe.

Additionally, numerous Native American whirligigs made of bone and clay have been found throughout the western United States, indicating the toy's antiquity in North America.

Because this toy could have easily been made with common materials, one can imagine this toy amusing people from the colonial period right up to the present day.

Activity Supplies and Materials

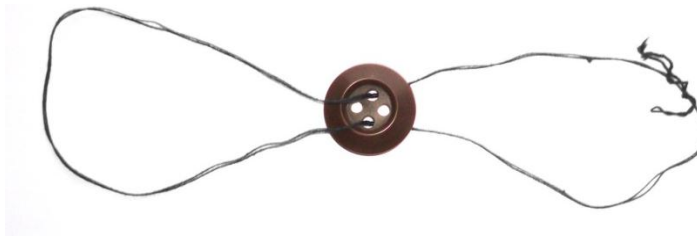
- 2-3 Feet of string, yarn, or thin ribbon
- 1 large button or other round, button-shaped object
- 1 Pair of scissors
- One or more Adults to assist young visitors (toymaking can be a fun group activity)

Instructions

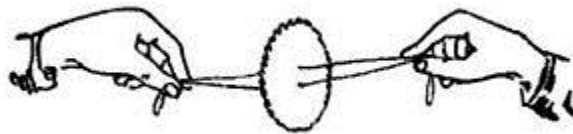
Cut a length of string approximately 3 feet long. Thread the string through one hole in the button and then through the hole directly across.

Tie both ends of the string together into a knot.

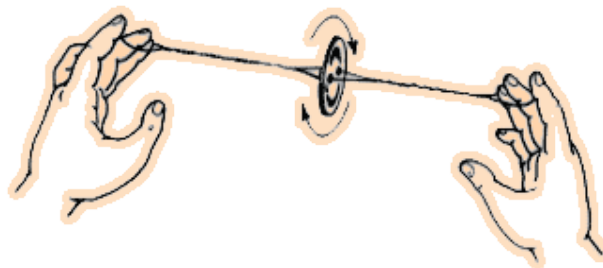
From the back of the button, pull the string until the button is in the center, as shown below.



Hold one end of the loop in each hand. Then swing the whirligig around in a circular motion to wind the string.



As you pull your hands in and out, the button will spin to unwind and then rewind the string.



*It may take a few tries to get it going.
Keep trying...it is worth it!*