

Alutiiq Dance Rattle

This activity creates an Alutiiq/Sugpiaq style dance rattle.



MATERIALS

- Wooden hoop
- 2 Sticks
- Scissors
- Synthetic sinew
- Lighter
- Deer hooves or shells



STEP ONE: GETTING STARTED

Buy or make a wooden hoop. You can use an embroidery hoop, a floral wreath hoop, or a flexible branch that can be bent and tied into a circle, etc. The hoop can be any size. We suggest 6 to 8 inches across. If you select a flexible branch, form a circle and lash the ends together.



STEP TWO: ADD HANDLES

1. Find two sticks longer than the diameter or your hoop (e.g., tongue depressors, small branches, popsicle sticks)
2. Place the sticks on one side of the hoop, crossing them in the middle.
3. Use synthetic sinew to lash the sticks together in the center of the hoop.
4. Now lash the four ends of the handles to the hoop. Tie a knot to secure each.



Optional: Adults can use a lighter to melt the ends of the sinew beside the knots, to make them more secure.

STEP THREE: LAY OUT ORNAMENTS

1. Lay your attachments (e.g., shells, hooves, pieces of antler) around the hoop, spacing them evenly and close enough to touch when hanging.
2. If your adornments are not pre-drilled, drill a hole in each so it can be attached to the hoop. Place the hole at the end of the ornament that you want to lie closest to the hoop.
CAUTION: drilling shells can generate harmful dust. Buy predrilled shells or drill holes with shells immersed in water.



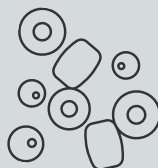
STEP FOUR: SECURE THE ORNAMENTS

1. Tie a long length of synthetic sinew to the end of one of the handles.
2. Loop the sinew through one of the adornments and tie a basic knot.
3. Loop the tail of the sinew over the hoop completely. Then, take the tail of the sinew and put it back under the sinew to create a secured loop.
4. Repeat until the hoop is filled with ornaments. Pay attention to the spacing. When all the ornaments are attached, tie a knot to secure.



OPTIONAL: DECORATE

Paint your rattle handles or add more ornaments.



***Kalla'un, Kalla'utaq* – Rattle**

This Alutiiq/Sugpiaq instrument is made from a set of two to five nested, wooden hoops. Pictures of ancestral rattles show that artists lashed or pegged these hoops to a pair of crossed wooden handles. Then, they attached many puffin beaks, drilling a tiny hole in every beak and lashing them to the hoops. Rattles collected on Kodiak in the early nineteenth century have at least fifty beaks each. Decoration was the final step. Some rattle handles were painted in red and black. Other rattles had feathers attached.

Loosely translated, the word *kalla'un* means “magical object” or “shaman’s object”. Rattles were part of the ceremonial gear that helped dancers and shamans interact with the spirit world, a process that involved singing, whistling, drumming, and shaking rattles. The noise brought spirits to the room. The connection between rattles and the non-human world is also seen in the design of the puffin beak rattle. Its nested hoops represent the multi-layered Alutiiq universe where circles are passageways between Earth and the sea and sky worlds. Here, birds are powerful creatures that can travel anywhere. They can fly in the sky, walk on land, and swim and dive in the ocean. The puffin beaks, feathers, and bird images on rattles channel the power of birds to reach other worlds.



Puffin Beak Rattle, Courtesy of the National Museum of Finland, Etholén Collection.

