

Making Recycled Instruments For Rhythm2Recovery Sessions

In many situations, making drums and percussion instruments from recycled materials is a useful alternative to purchasing these new. Apart from the obvious saving financially, making instruments is a useful collaborative and creative exercise and the instruments can often be given a personalised design that expresses some of the character, and personality of its creator. Additionally, these instruments can be given to participants to take home at the end of a course, so they can continue to play.

I usually spend the first session of the program making instruments with people working in pairs to design, construct and decorate the items.

Hand Drums – Preferred item – 15-19 litre (5 Gallon) water bottle



No cutting is required, simply remove any remaining plastic that covers the outlet spout and decorate.

Some bottles, like the one pictured have handles, which can be used to tie on a cloth strap, allowing people to play as they march or walk around, or simply to help stop the bottle from slipping when it is positioned between the legs.

There are a number of ways you can decorate the drums:

1. Use different coloured tape - use a white-board marker to sketch out your design on the bottle and then fill in with different lengths of wide coloured tape.
2. Wrap a lightweight hessian around the bottle and fix with a suitable craft glue. Then paint with water colours.
3. Provide the participants with a pile of 'youth culture' magazines and ask them to cut-out headlines that resonate with them. Or pictures of celebrities they identify with. You can also do this with nature magazines and ask them to identify animals they have an affinity with. Cut out the magazine headings or pictures and glue onto the drum directly.
4. Provide lengths of coloured cloth and wrap these around the drum using craft glue.





Bass Drums

You can make larger Bass drums from buckets and similar containers.

Remo makes a bucket lid that is specifically designed to fit onto a 5,6, or 7 gallon bucket and these sound great - <https://remo.com/products/product/rhythm-lid-skyndeeep/>

But you can also buy your own containers from your local hardware shop or container supplier and either turn them upside down or cover these with a plastic or cloth membrane and staple or tie down with a strong rubber band.

Decorate the container itself with cloth or paper designs using plastic adhering craft glue.



Wooden Mallets

You can fashion wooden mallets for your Bass drums from 35cm (14") lengths of 6mm (quarter inch) dowl or old drum sticks. Start by wrapping electrical tape around one end until it is quite thick and then cover with either yarn or cloth, tying it off tight.



Shakers

You can make a wide range of shakers and maracas from recycled instruments and different grains. Some of the easiest ones are made from cardboard toilet rolls, capped at either end with plastic bottle caps (use tape to seal) and filled with rice, beans or corn before decorating. Small plastic juice bottles work equally well.

Use steel cans for a louder sound.

