

Almond Sticks

My mother sent one of these toys to Byrd her first Christmas in our house. I came across it in a box of old toys recently and decided to play with making one myself. Below are instructions for how I make this toy.



Byrd's Jungle Talk Nut Maze
A present from Grandma

I start with 2" x 2" pine. It usually comes in 8 foot lengths. I cut the 8 foot piece into 6" lengths. When I cut them, I use the band saw. But it goes quicker when Jerry cuts them on the table saw.



The next step is to drill the holes. To do this you will need Spade drill bits. I use a 3/4 inch and a 7/8 inch bit.



I suppose you could drill the holes by hand—but I think this project would best be accomplished using a drill press.

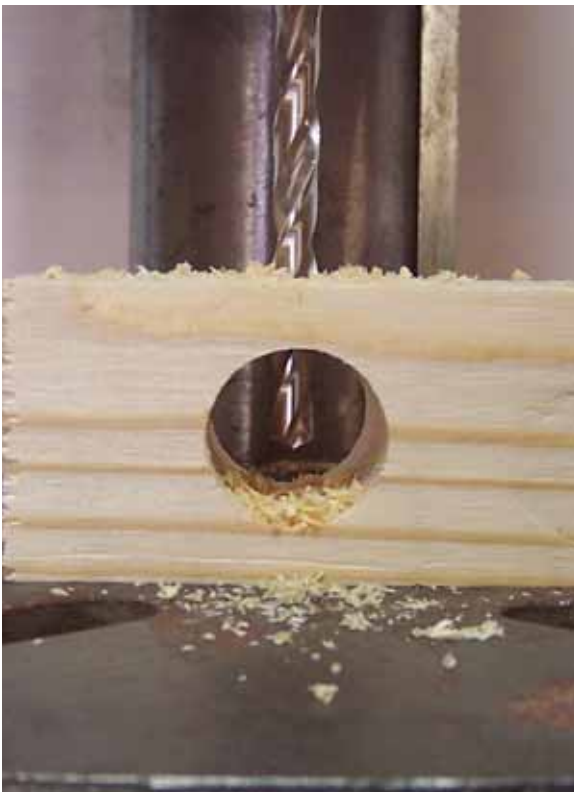
You will want to place a piece of wood under the Almond Stick before you drill.

And you need to make sure you clamp down both the piece of wood and the Almond Stick to hold steady while you drill.



In a 6 inch length of wood—you can drill 2 each $\frac{3}{4}$ inch holes and 1 each $\frac{7}{8}$ inch hole. I like to alter the holes so one is on the opposite side from the others.

If you make an 8 inch length, you can drill 2 holes of varying widths on eachside.



After I drill all the large holes with the Spade Bits, I drilled a hole with a regular drill bit through the center hole.

To drill this hole you can remove the piece of wood you had placed under the stick and drill through both sides at once. Just be sure to position your plate so that the drill bit goes through the wood and the hole in the plate on the drill press.

I drill this hole so I can string beads through the hole. I use a $\frac{13}{64}$ or a $\frac{7}{32}$ size drill bit to drill this hole. I find this is large enough for small Paulie rope or medium hemp rope.

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The last step is to drill a pilot hole in the top for the screw eye. You can use a hand held power drill for this.

Make sure the drill bit you use is slightly smaller than the screw eye you will be using. You want a tight fit when you turn the screw eye so it has a firm hold in the wood.



For my toys, I use nickel plated screw eyes. I found the Dritz screw eyes sold in the fabric store at the drapery department are nickel plated.

My birds don't chew on the metal screw eyes so I don't go to the expense of using stainless steel.



Here you see where I have pounded whole shelled almonds in each side of the two 3/4 inch holes I drilled. So I have 4 almonds total in the toy. 2 each in each hole.

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Now you will see the reason for the “hole through the middle hole”.

Take a piece of Paulie rope or hemp rope or 1/8 inch leather and string on some beads.

For this one I am using Paulie rope. I tied a knot in one end and put a piece of masking tape at the other end. The masking tape will keep the end from fraying and make it easier to string on beads.

Place a bead or two on the rope and then thread it through the first hole.



Next find some beads your parrot likes that will fit in the center hole. This is the hole I drill with the 7/8 inch Spade bit. Thread those beads on and then you are going to go through the other hole having these beads in the middle.



Thread the end of the rope through the second hole as shown in the photos left and right.



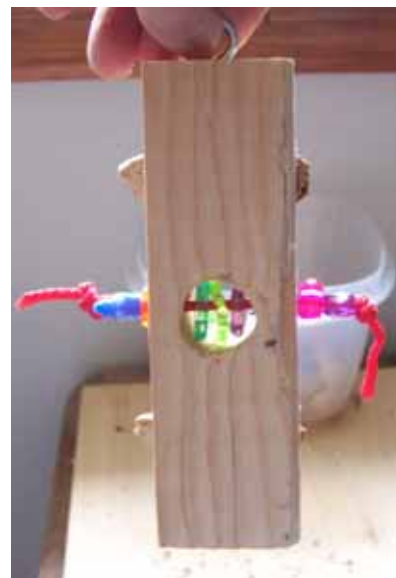
Add another bead or two to the other end and you are finished.



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I designed this toy with the beads inside to entice the parrots I have that aren't fond of chewing wood. Buddy loves rattling beads and he will chew a little on the side of the wood that has the hole with the beads hidden inside.

They all like going after the almonds.



And you can play around with your own design. You may want to drill some holes through one side of each hole as in this one pictured left. See where Ditto is going after the almond on one side and on the other side I have strung some beads.

Hopefully you will be able to make some of these yourself or together with friends who have the power tools needed to make them. If not — and you want to give a similar toy to your parrot—I found www.rosespet.com comes the closest with their Almond Joysticks and they are reasonably priced.

Or if you are wanting to make these but find you don't have in-shell almonds, and can't find any in the grocer's; Roses Pet Emporium sells nuts also.

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