Straw Pan Pipes for kids

The Peabody Workshop · Make Some Noise · grades K–4th · 20 minutes

Let's turn plain straws into a real instrument you can play! A long tube of air makes a low note, and a short tube makes a high note. This easy build costs nothing if you have the things below at home. Every step is one a child can do alone.

What you need

- Straws: 6, the wide kind is easiest

Tools: Kid scissors, A ruler, Tape.

Steps

1. Lay six straws side by side on the table.
2. Leave the first straw long, then cut each one a little shorter. Cut about a finger's width off each straw more than the one before. Line them up at the top.
3. Put a long piece of tape across all the straws, near the top. Keep the tops in a straight line: that's where you blow.
4. Add a second piece of tape lower down to hold them tight.
5. Hold the top against your lip and blow gently across one straw. Blow across the top, like blowing over a bottle, not into it. Soft and steady wins.
6. Play the long straw, then the short one. Which note is higher?

Test it

How many different notes can you play? Count in notes: more is better. Try it twice and keep the better number.

Why it works

When you blow across the top of a straw, the air inside shakes. In a long straw there's more air, so it shakes slowly and you hear a low note. In a short straw the air shakes fast, and the note is high.

Make it better

1. Add more straws for more notes.
2. Try to play a song you know, one straw at a time.
3. Plug the bottom of each straw with a bit of tape and hear the note change.

Free at peabody.kids/build/straw-pan-pipes