

ATE Learning Resources

How to make a paper gyil (Ghanaian xylophone!)

This is a picture of a traditional gyil – a beautiful instrument from Northern Ghana with a rich history! The gyil is the traditional instrument of the Dagaaba and Lobi people and is usually played in pairs. It is made from 14 wooden slats over a frame. The gyil is played at many events – weddings, funerals, dances and for everyday recreation!

We will be making a paper gyil instead, but feel free to decorate yours with colourful patterns!

You will need:

- Coloured paper
- String
- Scissors
- Tape
- Glue
- Ruler
- Glue stick
- Pencil



1. Make two thin tubes using rolled up paper, and tape up the edge so they stick
2. Make a thick tube by rolling paper round a glue stick. If you don't have a glue stick then feel free to use something else or just roll it freely. Tape it up again to make a tube.
3. Make a four more thick tubes of different lengths – use the glue stick method or handroll again if you like. Tape up again to stick.
4. Measure and cut ten bits of string of around 10cm length each
5. Tie two bits of string near the end of each tube, then tie all of the thick tubes to the thin tubes.
6. Use pencils as sticks to play!
7. Play your gyil!

For a video showing the process see:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxQOJja9XVM>