

How to Make a Scout Stave

The sticks you have will become, with lots of TLC, a wonderful walking stick, or stave, that you can keep for years. Many people use their staves as a reminder of happy scouting times, adding medallions, pendants and other decorations as souvenirs of events they have enjoyed, somewhat like a campfire blanket. To make them beautiful will take some work and how beautiful they are depends on the energy and effort you put into them. Do your best to make them a treasure.

****WARNING!! Keep in mind when working on your stave that it will probably have to be trimmed after it is dry. Don't put lots of effort into making the end gorgeous at the start because it may have to be cut off. As the wood dries it sometimes cracks and it would be sad to have your terrific carving fall apart. You can carve it more after your stave is trimmed to the right size**

Here's what you need to do.

1. Peel the bark off the stick. These are newly cut sticks and the bark is easiest to peel if done right away. You should try to get all the bark off.
2. Official Scout Staves are 5 ½ feet long (they aren't metric but you can convert them if you want to. That would be 165 cm.) They have a mark every foot (30cm) starting at the bottom with the top 6 inches (15cm) marked every inch (2.5cm.) How to make the marks is your choice. They can be carved into the wood. If you want to carve them, do so when you peel the bark. It's tricky. Take your time. (and don't start right at the end – remember the warning). Marks can also be made by tying a string or something like it around the stave or by painting it. If you want to use these methods, wait until your stave is dry.
3. You may want to whittle a design in your stick. Reread the warning at the top of the page before you start to carve.
4. The wood you are using is diamond willow. The diamonds in the wood can be accented if you carve them out a bit. This can be done either when the wood is fresh or when it dries. Don't carve them out too much.
5. Once you have peeled the bark and done any initial carving you want to do, mark your stave as your own (as in put your name on it). Use the sticker, carve your initials somewhere, use a marker or whatever but make sure your name is clear.
6. Give the sticks back to Akela. This is to prevent the accidental burning of your treasure in the family fire place or having your mom clean your room (because you didn't) and deciding to throw it out.
7. In spring, you will get your stave back (assuming you put your name on it). We will cut them to the right length and you can sand them. Doing a thorough job of sanding is very important. If you want to use your stave as a walking stick, you need it smooth or you will get blisters on your hand. Sanding the diamonds also adds to their over all appearance
8. Add any other decorations. This might include painting a design, additional carving, gluing a badge or other small item to it or anything else you think is cool. Don't overdo the decorations. It's the wood that matters most.
9. Varnish the whole thing. It will take numerous coats of varnish to make your stave smooth and beautiful.
10. Treasure your stave. You worked hard to make it