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The ugly stick is a percussive musical instrument from Newfoundland, Canada. Made from recycled household materials, such as mops, brooms, bottle caps, and tin cans, the ugly stick has a boot as its base and a “head” on top. It is played by striking the boot on the ground and beating rhythms on the stick. Used in traditional Newfoundland folk music, the ugly stick often accompanies accordions and fiddles. It is seen and heard at social gatherings, mummery events (short traveling plays), and kitchen concerts. Enjoy playing your ugly stick to some of your favorite folk songs!

MAKE**Materials**

- One rain boot
- Two paint stirrers
- 1½ in. x ½ in. x 3 ft. piece of wood
- Hammer and nails
- Thin wire
- Metal washers and bells in a variety of sizes
- Yarn
- Plastic cup
- Permanent markers
- Drill
- Newspaper
- Glue (optional)

Instructions

1. Attach one paint stirrer (or a portion of one) to the end of the 1½ in. x ½ in. x 3 ft. piece of wood with a drill and glue.
2. Drill four holes on the stick and put the piece of wire through the holes.
3. String the metal washers and bells on the wire and secure loosely.
4. Decorate a plastic cup as a head using markers and yarn.
5. Attach the head to the stick using the drill and glue.
6. Put the stick inside the boot and stuff the boot with newspapers to secure.
7. Play your ugly stick by bouncing the boot on the ground and striking the stick with your second paint stirrer.

**SEE**

Visit MIM's United States / Canada Gallery and see a Newfoundland ugly stick.

LISTEN

Check out [this playlist](#) for:

- Videos about the history and importance of the ugly stick
- Some ugly stick performances
- A quick ugly stick lesson
- “I’se the B’y,” a song you can sing and play along to

PLAY ALONG

“I’se the B’y” — The playlist contains a version by the Canadian folk-rock band Great Big Sea.

I’se the b’y that builds the boat
 And I’se the b’y that sails her
 I’se the b’y that catches the fish
 And brings ‘em home to Liza

Hip yer partner Sally Tibbo
 Hip yer partner Sally Brown
 Fogo, Twillingate, Morton’s Harbour
 All around the circle

I’se The B’y



The musical score consists of four staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are written below the notes. The melody is simple and repetitive, following the structure of the lyrics.

I'se the b'y that builds the boat and
 Hip yer partner Sally Tibbo

I'se the b'y that sails her
 Hip yer partner Sally Brown

I'se the b'y that catches the fish and
 Fogo, Twillingate, Morton's Harbour

brings 'em home to Liza
 All around the circle

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