

Making a Fuzz Stick

A fuzz stick is a small piece of wood which has had slices cut in the sides to create small shavings. Ideally, the shavings should remain attached to the stick, but if they are accidentally removed, they can still be used. Because the shavings are thin, they are easy to ignite. Because they are attached, they in turn ignite the larger host stick.

To make a fuzz stick safely, choose a piece of dry wood, preferably a dry, dead stick from an evergreen tree. The stick should be about the size of a pencil, or perhaps a little larger. Place one end of the stick against a firm surface, such as a log or a rock, hold the upper end with your left hand, and hold the knife in the right. Carefully slice into the stick with a downward, diagonal motion, maintaining even pressure. Stop before the knife reaches the center of the stick. Take another slice a little higher up, and repeat until the stick is covered with the slices of "fuzz." Turn the stick over and make more shavings on the other side. This is far easier to do with a sharp knife and with a soft wood such a pine, fir, spruce or hemlock. Be sure that you are always slicing away from your fingers. Think at all times about where the knife blade will go if the shaving breaks off, or the knife slips. Make sure that your hand, foot, leg, companions, etc. are not in the path!

Make several fuzz sticks and use them as the first layer of kindling, positioning them atop the tinder. In some cases, the fuzz sticks themselves can be used as tinder.

