

# Making the Thumb Piano

## Steps:

1. Buy gourd and thumb piano hardware
2. Clean the outside of the gourd
3. Design your thumb piano
4. Mark and cut the gourd
5. Clean out the inside
6. Sand the top flat
7. Mark, cut, and sand the soundboard
8. Cut the sound hole and drill the t-nut holes
9. Glue and clamp the soundboard onto the gourd
10. Sand the soundboard edges
11. Glue the bridge to the soundboard, and the bridge rod to the bridge
12. Apply finish as desired
13. Install keys and bridge
14. Tune and play!

A freshly-picked gourd is remarkably heavy, because the inside is almost completely filled with water, seeds, and pulp. Although it defies conventional wisdom, understand that gourds are picked and often left outdoors to dry. "Dry" means that the water inside the gourd is allowed to evaporate through the shell. Leaving them outside, where air can circulate around them, even through harsh winters, is the best way to dry them.

As the water inside the gourd evaporates through the shell, the shell dries and becomes impermeable. Some people try to speed the drying process by either drilling holes in the gourd, putting it in an oven, or aiming a heater at it. Bad idea! Air inside the gourd causes it to rot. Not only will it not dry properly, but the rot leaves a smell that no one has found a way to eliminate. So, you do not want to cut into a gourd before it is dry.

**Clean the Outside of the Gourd:** If you have a sink in the garage, use it to clean the gourd using dish soap, hot water, and a copper dish scrubber. You can use a hose and clean it on your driveway, patio, or deck. It's not as easy using cold water, but it's not brain surgery, either.