Here’s a way you can reuse an old mailing tube or poster container to create a great-sounding instrument. If you can’t find one of these at home, ask around. Your recycling needs can often be met by a neighbor or family friend and you can save one more object from getting into the waste stream!

**CREATING THE RAINSTICK EFFECT**

To turn a mailing tube into a rainstick, you need to find a way to create an obstruction – something that will block the materials inside from falling at one time. In bamboo or gourd rainsticks, a series of wooden spikes are used. Instead of that approach, we’ll create a wire “maze” using a combination of floral wire/jewelry wire (or any lightweight wire) and pipe cleaners.

Cut a length of wire about two to three times the length of the tube. If you cover the ends with a bit of tape, it’s easy for a child to help scrunch the wire up giving it many twists and turns in a way that will still fit inside the diameter of the tube. Then, twist in some pipe cleaners cut in half, throughout the length of your tangled wire. All these things will help catch the contents as they go from side to side to create the pleasing “falling water” effect.

**TUNE YOUR RAINSTICK**

The sound of your rainstick will vary greatly depending on what you decide to put into it as well as how much of that item you choose to add. For a quieter rainstick, use smaller objects such as seed beads, birdseed or tiny pasta such as pastina or acini de pepe. Slightly louder are objects like rice, dried lentils, small buttons or paper clips. Even louder are larger dried beans, pebbles, marbles or any large macaroni.

Here’s a good way of “tuning” your rainstick. Have several bowls of contents nearby. Close one end of your rainstick and add the contents. Seal the other end and try the sound. Dump it back into your bowl and try another. What sound is most pleasing to you? Or mix and match contents. It’s a fun way of experimenting with sound to discover what sounds best to your ear.

**MAKE IT BEAUTIFUL!**

Once you’ve decided on the perfect sound for your rainstick, there are lots of creative ways to decorate the outside of the instrument. You can color with crayons or permanent markers, create stripes from colorful tape, or even decoupage photos or magazine pictures onto the tube. You can paint a coat of glue on the rainstick and slowly wind different colors of yard around it. You can also cut squares or small pieces of fabric, cover them with a layer of glue and create a quilt or collage effect for a beautiful handmade rainstick. Feel free to get creative and make something that is truly unique!

**PLAY YOUR RAINSTICK**

Rainsticks are most often played by simply turning them upside down. However, you can also hold them horizontally and shake the contents back and forth like a rattle or shake the stick as the contents fall producing some nice variations in ways to play this simple but versatile instrument!