



Cutting in Half

Cut the wood in half and hollow out the inside of the didgeridoo.

I allow enough time to complete the whole process of cutting, hollowing, gluing and clamping in one session and will not start unless I can finish. By doing so the risk of warping, twisting and other mishaps can be avoided.



How to Make a Wooden Didgeridoo
Part 4 - Cutting in Half

This part of the process of making a didgeridoo is crucial. The outside can be changed, the length cut shorter and so on. However, the quality of the cut is paramount to making the join as invisible as possible when glued back together, and the quality of the hollowing creates or destroys the quality of the sound the finished didgeridoo will make. Neither of which are easy to change once done.

Although the wood is seasoned, there is still moisture in it and it may still twist or warp, especially as the bore is removed. The wood grew, supporting its own structure, and in making the didgeridoo this structure is disrupted with the tension in the wood, designed to support itself, suddenly no longer there. The didgeridoo is in two

halves and each half may distort independently. This can make a neat, almost invisible joint almost impossible. To reduce this risk I do everything together and will not start if I do not have time to finish.

If it is not possible to complete this process in one go, then try to keep the wood as stable as possible. Treat both halves the same. I have read and been told, though I have not needed to do so, myself, that covering the wood in plastic helps keep it stable, as does coating the wood in PVA. (Bear in mind that the PVA won't come off later on and will already have dried on the gluing surface, unless it is removed, which may adversely affect the quality of the join.

Cut

Before I laid hands on a bandsaw, I tried as many (lots) of hand saws, from frame saws, reciprocating saws, ordinary hand saw, Japanese hand saw (Hassume). Of these the Hassume came out on top, with a good clean cut which was easily achieved, however it was not easy for cutting the tighter curves in the timber due to the depth of the blade.

Setting the bandsaw up is correctly essential if you want a hassle free cut, ensuring a sharp blade is used, with the cutting speed and height adjusted correctly. Allow enough space, both sides of the blade for the wood to go and consider how it will be supported. The wider the blade, the smoother the cut, but is offset by not being able to cut such a tight radius as can the thinner blades. The number of teeth in an inch of the blade is crucial as well. The more teeth the cleaner the cut, but is offset by the more teeth per inch of blade the thinner material you can cut (as the teeth clog with the waste material). For most didgeridoos I use a 5/8" blade with 4tpi (teeth per inch).





If the piece to be cut is fairly straight it makes it a darn sight easier to feed through the saw as a smooth motion can be adopted. If the piece has significant twists and curves I would recommend practicing how you are going to do the cut. With pieces that are other than straight, I mark where I want the cut to be. Also consider how you are going to hold it if, for example it has a large or flared bell, one end will be very heavy!

Feed the wood through the bandsaw, taking care to keep it level and straight. It is easy, as the cut progresses, and your grip on the wood changes, for the wood to rotate. This is exacerbated if the cut is not in

the middle of the wood, the downward force of the blade will pull it in one direction. I have finished with some very interesting pieces of wood almost looking like a corkscrew. Another thing to be mindful of when cutting the didgeridoo is pushing too hard and causing the blade to twist. When this happens, the cut will veer off centre and you will end up cutting a strip from the wood, rather than cut it in half. I have experimented feeding the wood thin and thick end first to see if the wood cuts better one way or the other but can't say as I've noticed the difference. I cut the wood thick end first only because I find handling the wood easier.

With longer, larger, heavier, or more awkward pieces of timber it is advisable to ask a friend to help with holding the wood as it passes through the saw or even build a jig (wooden blocks with a V cut in them will suffice) that will help hold the wood in place as it is cut. Like with most of the processes it is always advisable to do a dry run. Work out how you are going to cut the wood, make sure you have enough clearance taking into account any curves or bends in the wood.

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