

Period Fire making instructions

Participants may use percussion (flint and steel, but not ferrocerium) or friction (hand/bow drill, fire plow, etc.) methods to start a fire, and there will be two separate competitions for the two categories. Solar fire making methods are not recommended due to the impact of weather conditions, but if participants want to use a solar method, they will compete in the flint and steel group.

The use of charred cloth 1 and touchwood 1, 2 (processed tinder fungus or amadou) as tinder are documentable prior to 1600 CE, so may be used, but other tinder materials that can be gathered from natural environments and minimally processed may also be used, including but not limited to chaga, charred punk wood, and charred cattail fluff*. Tinder bundle materials may consist of hemp or linen tow, jute, and/or materials that can be gathered from natural environments, including but not limited to cedar bark, dry grass, pine needles, birch bark, and cattail fluff. Tinder and tinder bundle materials may be prepared prior to the competition. Sulfur matches, while used prior to 1600 CE 3, 4, may not be used.

The goal of the competition is to light a candle, so participants will need a candle! Beeswax is preferred, and participants may find a taper candle easiest to use. The candle should be new (no charring on the wick). A candleholder may also be used. How will this work? Each participant will show and describe their tools, materials, and preparations. This will both ensure that all participants are using acceptable kits and (more importantly) allow for everyone to share their knowledge and learn from each other!

Documentation is highly encouraged but not required.

After the show-and-tell portion, the competition will start with a countdown, and all participants will try to light their candle the fastest while the first participant to light their candle will be the winner, participants may continue to work until their candle is lit.

What do I get if I win?

Other than bragging rights, the winners of the percussion and friction contests will receive a prize.

If there is only one participant in either contest, the participant will be asked to demo the process by which they make fire, explaining as they go (rather than going through the process as quickly as they can). In recognition of their competitive spirit and willingness to share their knowledge, they will receive the prize for their contest.

★ Fire making comes with inherent risk, and those risks can increase when gathering natural material for use as tinder or in a tinder bundle. Only utilize materials that you can identify and know are safe to use, especially when it comes to fungi!

References:

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2. O. Schmidt, *Wood and Tree Fungi: Biology, Damage, Protection, and Use*, Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2006.

3. J. Needham and Wang L., *Science and Civilisation in China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962. [Online]. Available:

https://books.google.com/books?id=oJ9nayZZ2oEC&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

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