

# HOW TO MAKE CHAR CLOTH

<https://www.wikihow.com/Make-Char-Cloth>

It's not easy lighting a fire with flint and steel, especially if your tinder is scarce or damp. Char cloth makes the task much easier. Making it takes about ten minutes of work, less than an hour of waiting, and uses supplies you probably already have.

## What you will need:

- Metal tin or can (with lid or aluminum foil)
- 100% natural fabric
- Heat source (camping stove, hot coals, or fire)
- Hammer and nail or awl
- Fabric scissors

## Step 1: Find an empty metal tin.

- Many people use breath mint tins, but any clean, metal container will do. Clean the inside.
- To make a large amount of char cloth, use a paint can or oatmeal can. Check that they are 100% metal, with no plastic or rubber parts.
- For a can without a lid, wrap the top tightly with aluminum foil.

## Step 2: Punch a hole in the lid.

- Stab a hole in the top with an awl or a nail and hammer. It should be large enough to stick the tip of a pen through, but not the whole pen. Gases and hot air will escape through this hole, preventing the tin from exploding
- If the hole is too large, air may enter the tin and set the cloth on fire, burning it to ash instead of char cloth.

## Step 3: Choose a natural fabric.

- Any old, clean 100% cotton t-shirt or pair of denim blue jeans are good options.
- Most dyed cloth will work fine, but never use cloth with synthetic material

## Step 4: Cut the fabric into pieces.

- The fabric will shrink during charring, so 2-inch squares of fabric will leave you with a small but manageable piece of char cloth.
- Exact measurement is not necessary, nor are even edges. Just eyeball the size and cut up the fabric with a pair of scissors.
- All pieces should be small enough to lay flat inside the tin. Rolled up pieces may not char properly.

#### Step 5: Fill the container.

- Drop the fabric squares into the container, keeping them mostly flat.
- You can leave space in the tin or nearly fill it, as long as you don't tamp down the fabric.

#### Step 6: Put on a ventilated heat source.

- The charring cloth will let off a bad-smelling and potentially toxic smoke.
- Set up a heat source outside over non-flammable ground.
- Options include
  - Camping stove turned to minimal flame.
  - Bed of hot coals from a fire or grill.

#### Step 7: Wait until it stop smoking.

- The cloth inside the tin will partly fall apart into gas and ash, leaving ready-to-light carbon behind.
- The smoke and fire (burning gas) leaving the hole is a good sign.
- Leave the can on the heat source until the smoke and fire are gone.
- This can take anywhere from 5 to 50 minutes, but 15 minutes is routine.
- Larger tins and lower temperatures make the process longer.
- Keep the can upright, so the hole is on the top or upper side.

#### Step 8: Let the tin cool.

- Remove the tin from the fire or coals and place it on a fireproof surface.
- Wait until its cool enough to touch.

#### Step 9: Inspect the cloth.

- You should end up with completely black charcoal, with the fiber patterns still visible.
- You should be able to handle it without it falling apart.
- Peel the pieces apart and store them in a waterproof bag for emergencies or camping convenience.
- If the cloth isn't fully black, return it to the tin and heat again.
- If the cloth crumbles to dust when touched, then you left it on the fire too long. Try again with new fabric.