

FOLEY FUN: MAKE MOVIE SOUNDS WITH STUFF FROM HOME



Kids learn how Foley artists make movie sounds with everyday objects, then perform their own sound effects for a short story. The site's Sound Studio page is a good warm-up for listening.

Learning goal Kids will explain that sounds come from vibrations and that everyday objects can copy other sounds for a movie.	Ages 6-11	Time 20-30 minutes
--	--------------	-----------------------

Group: 2-10 kids, working at stations or taking turns

Materials

- Two coconut halves, or two plastic cups or small bowls as a stand-in (horse hooves)
- A thin metal baking sheet held by the edges (thunder)
- An old pair of gloves, leather if you have them (bird wings)
- Cellophane or a crinkly plastic wrapper (crackling fire)
- Dried beans or rice sealed inside a plastic container or a cardboard tube taped shut at both ends (rain)
- A towel or tray to clomp on
- A device to open the site's Sound Studio page (optional)
- A phone or tablet to record and play back (optional)

Before you start

- Set out each sound maker at its own spot and label it with a sticky note: hooves, thunder, wings, fire, rain.
- Seal the bean container or tube with tape before kids arrive. Check it doesn't leak.
- Check the baking sheet edges for sharp spots.
- If you'll use the Sound Studio page, open it and test the volume first.
- Write a 4-line story to read aloud, for example: A horse trots into town. A storm rolls in. Birds fly off the fence. Everyone warms up by the campfire.

Step by step

- 1 Ask kids: in a movie, do you think every sound was recorded at the moment it was filmed? Then explain Foley: people who perform sound effects in sync with the picture, often using ordinary objects. It's named after Jack Foley, an early sound-effects pioneer in film.
- 2 Warm up by listening. Open the site's Sound Studio page and play a few sounds, or have kids close their eyes while you make sounds. Guess what made each one.
- 3 Hooves: clomp the coconut halves or cups on the towel or tray in a da-da-dum rhythm. Try slow for walking and fast for galloping.
- 4 Thunder: a grown-up or older kid holds the baking sheet by two edges and gently wobbles it. Foley artists and old theaters used big thin metal sheets for thunder.
- 5 Wings: grab the gloves by the cuffs and flap them together fast.
- 6 Fire: crinkle the cellophane slowly and softly. Foley artists use cellophane for crackling fire.

- 7 Rain: tip the sealed bean container slowly from one end to the other. Rainsticks were traditionally filled with beans or pebbles to copy the sound of rain.
- 8 Feel the vibrations: put a hand flat on the baking sheet while it rumbles. Sound is things shaking the air, and the air shaking your eardrums.
- 9 Perform the story. A grown-up reads each line and points to the kid whose sound comes next.
- 10 Record it and play it back if you can. Ask: which sound fooled you best?

Safety

- Dried beans and rice are a choking hazard for little kids. Keep them sealed in a taped container and supervise siblings under 4.
- Never put beans, rice, or small objects in ears, noses, or mouths.
- A grown-up checks the baking sheet for sharp edges and handles it with younger kids.
- Keep sounds at a comfortable volume and never make a loud sound right next to someone's ear.
- Wash hands after handling the sound makers.

Talk about it

- Which homemade sound sounded most like the real thing? Why do you think so?
- What did you feel when you touched the baking sheet during the thunder sound?
- Why might a movie crew make a sound by hand instead of recording the real thing?
- What everyday object could you use for footsteps in snow or a creaky door?
- How would a scary scene sound different from a funny scene if you used the same objects?

Make it easier

Use just two stations, hooves and wings, and let the grown-up give cues by pointing. Skip the story and play a guess-the-sound game instead.

Take it further

Invent a sound for something that doesn't exist, like robot footsteps or an alien sneeze, and explain what you used. Or test fillers for your rain maker: rice, beans, and pasta, and vote on which sounds most like rain.

No screen? No problem

Skip the Sound Studio page. Play a closed-eyes guessing game with sounds made from things in the room: tapping a pencil, crumpling paper, pouring water, jingling keys.

Sources

Foley (filmmaking), Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foley_\(filmmaking\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foley_(filmmaking))
Foley sound, ACMI (Australian Centre for the Moving Image).
<https://www.acmi.net.au/education/school-program-and-resources/foley-sound/>
Inside the World of Foley, The Los Angeles Film School. <https://www.lafilm.edu/blog/inside-the-world-of-foley/>
Expert comment: The animal sounds in most nature documentaries are made by humans, Northumbria University, Newcastle. <https://newsroom.northumbria.ac.uk/pressreleases/expert-comment-the-animal-sounds-in-most-nature-documentaries-are-made-by-humans-heres-how-they-do-it-and-why-it-matters-3297094>
Mechanical Sound Effects, Prop Agenda (Eric Hart). <https://www.props.eric-hart.com/how-to/mechanical-sound-effects/>
Rainsticks, Science World (British Columbia). <https://www.scienceworld.ca/resource/rainsticks/>
Sound, Science World (British Columbia). <https://www.scienceworld.ca/resource/sound/>

Not tied to any curriculum standard. Adapt freely for your group. Free to print for personal, classroom and event use.