

ILLUSTRATED STEPS / SAVE IT. FIND IT. BUILD IT.

CHAR CLOTH

Prepare a small batch of tinder that holds a spark as a glowing ember.



START HERE

01

GET READY

Tools + clickable build map

02

FOLLOW THE STEPS

One clearly numbered stage at a time

03

FIND IT AGAIN

Quick reference + PDF bookmarks

This outdoor project uses an established, permitted campfire. It prepares tinder for later use; it does not replace learning safe fire management. Never heat the tin indoors.

[WATCH THE TIKTOK](#)

[MORE FREE BUILD GUIDES](#)

SOURCES / Jack Raven Bushcraft: cooling and storage · Woodland Ways: char cloth and sparks

[BUILD MAP](#)

[NEXT](#)

YOUR BUILD MAP

Tap a step to jump there. The printed page numbers work offline too.

HAVE THESE READY

- 100% cotton cloth; scissors
- Plain uncoated steel char tin; small vent
- Permitted fire ring; established coals
- Long metal tongs and heat gloves
- Water, bucket, shovel and metal test tray
- Ferro rod/striker; dry storage container

READ IN ORDER

PREP	Prepare the safe area	03
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05	Extinguish and store	08
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QUICK REFERENCE / PAGE 10

BEFORE YOU START

Outdoor, permitted fire only. Keep the tin vent open during heating. Cool completely before opening. Never use accelerants, indoor heat, or a sealed pressure vessel.

KEEP THIS COPY

Save the PDF with its guide ID. Use the build map, bookmarks, or your PDF reader's search to find a step later. Video and source links need internet; the instructions do not.

BUILD MAP

PREVIOUS

NEXT

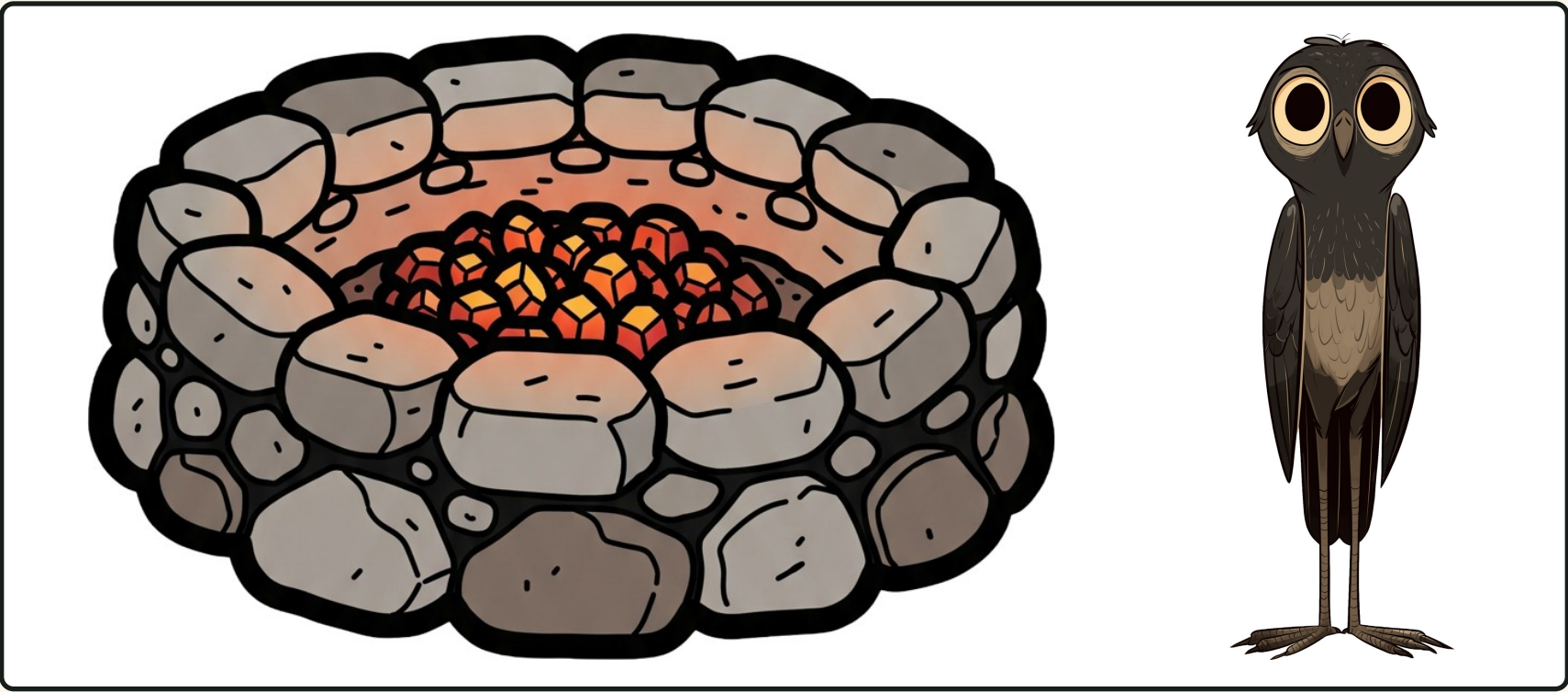
SETUP

Prepare the safe area

READ BEFORE STEP 01

PREP

Do the planning while everything is cold.



CHECK THE SITE

- **Check current restrictions and weather.**
- Postpone in dry or windy hazardous conditions.
- Use an existing permitted fire ring, clear of vegetation and overhead branches.
- Keep water, a bucket and shovel within reach.
- Never use flammable liquids.

ARRANGE THE TOOLS

- **An adult must attend the fire throughout.**
- Set out long metal tongs, heat gloves and a stable nonflammable cooling surface away from foot traffic.
- Keep children and pets back.
- Prepare a bare metal tray for a small spark test inside the ring.

SOURCES / Smokey Bear: campfire safety · National Park Service: fire safety

STEP

Load cotton loosely

1 OF 5 / READ IN ORDER

01

Use known materials and leave the vent clear.



CHOOSE THE TIN

- Use a small, plain, uncoated steel char tin intended for direct heat, with a fitted lid and a preformed vent about 1/16 inch (1.6 mm) across.
- Reject painted, lined, plastic-part or unknown containers; do not burn coatings off.

CUT AND LOAD

- Confirm the cloth is 100% cotton.
- Cut roughly 2-inch (5 cm) squares, smaller if needed to fit comfortably.
- Place them loosely inside without compressing.
- Close the lid.
- Keep the vent unobstructed throughout heating; never use a sealed pressure vessel.

SOURCES / Red Squirrel Resources: making char cloth · Vikings North America: member handbook, p. 56

STEP

Watch the vent

2 OF 5 / READ IN ORDER

02

The escaping gases tell you when to remove the tin.



PLACE ON THE EMBERS

- Using the long tongs and heat gloves, set the closed tin securely on an established bed of coals inside the fire ring.
- Keep the fire small and attended.
- Leave the vent facing up and clear.

OBSERVE FROM CLEAR AIR

- Smoke will escape and may form a flame at the vent.
- Keep your face and hands clear; do not inhale the smoke.
- When smoke and vent flame stop, remove the tin as described next.
- Do not open it to check.

SOURCES / Red Squirrel Resources: making char cloth · National Park Service: fire safety

STEP

Leave the lid on

3 OF 5 / READ IN ORDER

03

The tin and everything inside must cool completely.



MOVE WITH TOOLS

- **Lift the hot tin with long tongs and heat gloves onto the prepared nonflammable surface.**
- Leave it closed and undisturbed until completely cold.
- Keep people away from it while it cools.

NO EARLY PEEK

- **Opening hot char cloth admits oxygen and can ignite it.**
- There is no fixed cooling time here.
- If you are unsure it has cooled throughout, wait longer.
- Never pack a warm tin or cloth into your gear.

SOURCES / Red Squirrel Resources: making char cloth · Jack Raven Bushcraft: cooling and storage

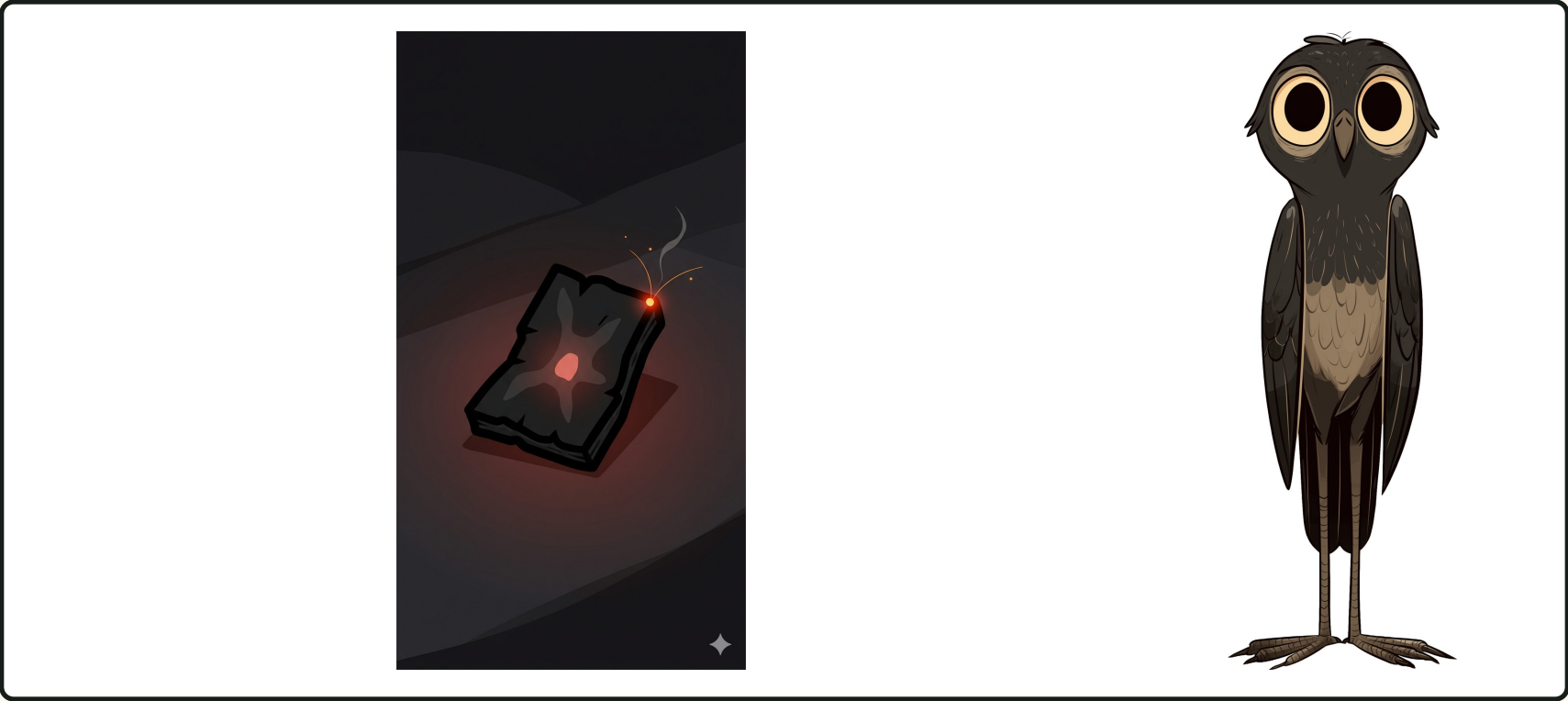
STEP

Check one cooled piece

4 OF 5 / READ IN ORDER

04

A contained ember is the checkpoint.



INSPECT THE BATCH

- **Only open the completely cold tin.**
- The cloth should be black and still hold together under gentle handling.
- Powdery ash is a failed batch; do not count it as usable cloth.

TRY A TINY SAMPLE

- **Put a tiny piece on the bare metal tray inside the permitted fire ring.**
- Follow your ferro rod and striker instructions to direct sparks onto it.
- Look for a spreading glow.
- Keep the piece on the tray; never hold glowing cloth.
- Extinguish it immediately in Step 5.

SOURCES / Vikings North America: member handbook, p. 56 · Woodland Ways: char cloth and sparks

STEP

05

Extinguish and store

5 OF 5 / READ IN ORDER

Keep the test ember separate from the unused batch.



PUT ALL HEAT OUT

- **Drown the test piece with water.**
- Drown the campfire, stir through all embers with the shovel, then add water and repeat until everything is cold.
- Hover the back of your hand above the ashes to check for heat.
- Stay until fully out.

PACK ONLY COLD TINDER

- **Put unused, completely cooled and dry char cloth into a dry airtight container.**
- Keep the wet tested piece out of this supply.
- Never seal or carry away anything warm or glowing.
- Pack out the cooled test residue.

SOURCES / Smokey Bear: campfire safety · Jack Raven Bushcraft: cooling and storage

NOTE

Know what you made

KEEP THESE LIMITS WITH THE STEPS

REF

Successful char cloth stores a spark as an ember.



USE WITHIN ITS LIMITS

- **Char cloth is one part of a fire-lighting kit.**
- It needs suitable tinder and a safe, permitted place before an ember becomes a campfire.
- This small test does not require blowing a tinder bundle into flame.

IF THE SAMPLE FAILS

- **Keep an uncertain batch out of your ready-to-use kit.**
- Review the cotton, loose loading and vent before making a fresh small batch.
- Let every batch cool completely before inspecting it; never reopen a hot tin to troubleshoot.

SOURCES / Vikings North America: member handbook, p. 56 · Woodland Ways: char cloth and sparks

QUICK REFERENCE

Read the full steps first. Tap any row to return to its instructions.

BEFORE STEP 01

Outdoor, permitted fire only. Keep the tin vent open during heating. Cool completely before opening. Never use accelerants, indoor heat, or a sealed pressure vessel.

01	Load loosely 100% cotton, roughly 2-inch squares. Use an uncoated steel tin with an unobstructed 1/16-inch vent.	P04
02	Heat and observe Keep the small fire attended. Stay clear of vent gases; remove when smoke and vent flame stop.	P05
03	Cool completely Move with long tools onto a nonflammable surface. Leave the lid on until tin and contents are completely cold.	P06
04	Test a tiny piece Inspect black cloth, then spark-test on a metal tray inside the permitted ring. Never hold glowing cloth.	P07
05	Extinguish and store Drown test and fire, stir and repeat until cold. Store only unused, fully cooled, dry char cloth.	P08

NUKE SAYS

Future me appreciates labels. And a completely cold tin.

SOURCES / Vikings North America: member handbook, p. 56 · Woodland Ways: char cloth and sparks