

INTRO TO BROOM MAKING- A TURKEY WING WHISK

Sally Ray
Craftcation Conference 2026

HISTORY:

Brooms have been used since ancient times, but they were crudely made from readily available materials like twigs, weeds, palm fronds, etc. It wasn't until the late 1700s that a round broom was made with sorghum grass- now called broom corn. Credited with the invention is one Levi Dickinson of Massachusetts who made one as a gift for his wife. The Shakers refined the design to a flat broom, and by 1850, the US was producing about 1 million brooms a year, becoming industry as opposed to a home craft.

The turkey wing whisk is had both Appalachian and Shaker roots, evolved with the adoption of broom corn and was used for cleaning hearths, tables and counters. It is said that the shape came from actual turkey wings that were dried extended and used as a broom.

We will be tying a turkey wing whisk broom by using a foot brake (a dowel with the cording spooled around it) to dispense the cord.

Begin toward the sweep end of the broom and work toward the handle.
The bristle or sweep end of the corn should be across your lap pointing to your dominant hand.

1. Start with 6 oz of broom corn, 3 oz of each color.
2. Separate hurl in to eight sections, placing them in a criss cross pile, alternating the color.
3. Get ready to tie. No stopping once we start! Have everything nearby:
 - Jerk String (Rip cord)
 - Scissors or knife
 - Broom hanger (loop of twine, leather strap, etc.)
 - Lighter
 - Foot brake and twine
 - Broom corn
4. Position foot brake in front of you so that the cord is feeding from the top. (if you pull the cord toward your the brake should roll toward you)
5. Tie a double knot in the end of the cord, melt the frayed cut end with the lighter.
6. Pull out enough cord so that the end is about waist high.
7. Grab the first bundle of corn and bury the knot in the center of the bundle about 2/3 down the length of the hurl from the cut, (handle) end.
8. Loosely wrap the cord 3x (towards you) around the bundle. The cord should be coming off of the top of the bundle.

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9. Pull to tighten.
10. Make a V with the cord by tilting the bundle sweep end down, make one rotation and level.
11. Add the second bundle in front of the first, under the cord. Repeat by wrapping 3x, then add the V.
12. Repeat until all 8 bundles are added, keeping bundles nest to each other and keeping tension on the cord. When you need more cord, place your thumb on the cord and release the foot brake to be able to pull and wrap.
13. When you are near the top of the handle, place the jerk string under the cord, in the center of what will be the back of the broom. The knot of the jerk string should be on the sweep end which should be on you dominant hand side.
14. Complete at least 4 more rotations, and add an optional hanging string. Complete at least 4 more rotations.
15. Place your thumb on the cord to keep tension, and cut the cord in front of the broom, leaving at least 6”.
16. Place the cut end of the cord though the loop of the jerk string at the handle end of the broom. Keeping your thumb on the wrap cord at all times.
17. Grab the knotted end of the jerk string (should be pointing toward the sweep end) and yank it through the wraps.
18. Cut the end of the cord and lightly apply flame to melt the frayed end.
19. Trim the handle end, and if desired, the sweep end.
20. “Shrimping” is gently bending a curve on the “wrap” side of the broom

NOTE:

This is only one way to tie a turkey tail; techniques sometimes vary with broom makers.

Some people find it more comfortable/ intuitive to wrap by rotating the bundle AWAY from them. As long as the wrap is tight and it works this should be fine!