

# NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION FOR ALL RESOURCES

Partnership of IllumiNative and the National Indian Education Association



ILLUMINATIVE



Grade Level

**6-8**

Subject

**Social Studies**

Lesson Title

**Play the Paiute Hand Game  
Sticks and Bones**

**Activity Description:** Many Native American tribes play their own types of hand games. These games are very competitive and have been played since before recorded history. Many times these games were high stakes and played to win prizes such as the rights to use land. Today youth and adults play hand games competitively for money or prizes. In this activity, learn some of the history of the Paiute tribe and the rules of the Paiute hand game. Then, make game sticks and bones to play with family and friends.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Wi-fi optional
- 10 thin sticks, 8-12 inches long ( can be craft sticks, small branches, or any other thin wooden sticks)
- 4 short thick sticks for the “bones”
- Paint for decorating the sticks and “bones”
- YouTube video [Sticks and Bones: Paiute Hand Games](#)
- Print or digital version of [Sticks and Stones: Paiute Hand Game instructions](#)

## STEPS

Native American tribes have traditionally used games as a source of entertainment, competition, character building, and prize winning long before European explorers made contact with tribes. This hand game comes from the Paiute tribes which live mostly in western states. Learn the game and challenge your friends and family to a competition.

### **Pre-Activity Steps:**

1. Watch this YouTube video [Sticks and Bones: Paiute Hand Games](#) to watch the game.
  - a. How does the game incorporate play and cultural tradition?
2. Read the [instructions for the Paiute Hand Game](#). If Wi-Fi is not available, just follow the steps below to play.

### **Game Activity:**

1. For the sticks and bones, find and decorate ten sticks such as popsicle sticks, small branches, or thin wood rods. Then create a set of two “bones:” each set should have one bone with a stripe and one plain. These do not have to be real animal bones; you can make them out of short thick pieces of wood.
2. Decide which bone will be guessed for the round: the plain or striped one.
3. Two teams sit opposite of each other to take turns being the “hiding” and “guessing” team.
4. Two people on the hiding team take a pair of bones and hide them in their hands. They can use a cloth or their shirt over their hands to try to trick the other team.
5. The other members of the hiding team play traditional instruments to distract the guessing team.
6. A chosen member of the guessing team points to which hiding hand might be holding the guessing bone.
7. If the guess is correct, the guessing team gets the bone. If the guessing team is incorrect, they have to give one stick to the hiding team as a point.
8. Then the hiding team chooses two more people to hide the bones. These rounds continue until the guessing team has collected all the bones. The game ends when one team collects all the sticks and wins.

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## HELPFUL TIPS

**Parents and caregivers:** This activity not only teaches healthy competition and cultural tradition, but it also gives young people a chance to show their cultural pride or musical talent. If you learn the game as well, you can play along with your child and invite family and friends to play. Here are a few suggestions for making this activity a deeper cultural experience for you and your family:

- Teach your children an instrumental song or chant to sing while hiding the “bones.” If you do not have a song or any instruments, you can play this fast, [northern handgame song by Bryan Hudson Jr.](#) This video also shows what the sticks and bones can look like for the game.
- This activity is also a good opportunity to learn more about the Paiute tribes if you are not familiar with the tribes. Visit the website [Paiute Indian Fact Sheet](#) with your child to learn more cultural facts and history of the Paiute.

## WANT TO LEARN MORE?

**Families and educators:** Playing games at home or in the classroom teaches multiple skills as well as builds knowledge. Use various cultural games to engage young people in learning about other tribes and building cooperation and communication skills.

- To encourage young people to learn about and play other traditional Native games, visit the [Native American Games](#) list and instructions in this game kit by Wake Forest University.

### Activity Resources:

- “Sticks and Bones: Paiute Hand Games” YouTube video by Nevada Arts [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=4&v=DwD059RLyh8&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=DwD059RLyh8&feature=emb_logo)
- “Sticks and Stones: Paiute Hand Game” article from Nevada 150 <http://www.nevada150.org/sticks-and-stones-paiute-hand-games/>

### Additional Resources:

- “Paiute Indian Fact Sheet” from Native Languages of the Americas website [http://www.bigorin.org/paiute\\_kids.htm](http://www.bigorin.org/paiute_kids.htm)
- “Fast Hand Game Song by Bryan Hudson Jr.” YouTube video by Janjay Kupjinkleheimer-Schmidt <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEgDluZ7Mlc>
- “Native American Games” a game kit by Wake Forest University <https://prod.wp.cdn.aws.wfu.edu/sites/88/2012/04/Fun-and-Games-Teachers-Guide.pdf>