

# How to Make Char Cloth

Char Cloth is cloth that has been made into charcoal. It is heated at high temperature in the absence of oxygen to drive off flammable solids, leaving a black cloth, which catches and holds a spark.

Making char cloth is not difficult. All you need is a can and some cloth. A one quart or one pint new paint can works well. The lid needs to fit tightly. Punch a 1/16 inch hole in the lid. The best char cloth is made of heavy gauge cotton cloth, something like T-shirts, old towels, "terry" cloth or canvas duck.

Cut the cloth into squares of two inches, or so, and put them in the can loosely, not stacked tightly. Fill the can, but not so much as to compress the squares. Put the lid on and set the can in an open fire or on a camp stove. Always do this out doors because of the strong fumes it will give off.

As the can heats, you will see gases or smoke begin to stream from the hole in the lid. When smoke stops coming from the hole, drag the can off and let it cool. If you open it too quickly, the rush of oxygen will cause the cloth to burst into flame, and you'll have to start over. Good char cloth is black, but still has a lot of strength. It should not fall apart from ordinary handling. If it's more like black ash than black cloth, you cooked it too much. If the squares are brown instead of black, or if it is obvious the cloth hasn't been heated evenly, put the top back on and cook it some more.

