

Chopsticks

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I'm an inveterate saver of odds and ends that I can use in the crafting loft (sometimes to my own chagrin!). I routinely keep odd buttons and fasteners, cardboard rolls from paper towels and toilet paper, cereal boxes, paper clips, and thread spools, to name a few.

I have found use for all of these items in my various projects, but few have been more useful than those "disposable" chopsticks that come with Chinese take-out meals.

Over the past few years I've built up a bit of a stockpile, and it's a good thing too, because they are often just the thing I need to complete a project.



The chopsticks I have are 10" long, and are made of bamboo, which is lightweight and quite strong. The sticks are not quite fully round; instead, they are flattened slightly and have a fully flat area at the top end that is about 1" long. The other end is milled to a gradual point, and the sticks are smooth to the touch. When I'm working in the craft room, I often find myself reaching for one of them.

First of all, they're handy tools for basic crafting tasks, such as stuffing small toys. I actually do own a couple of dedicated stuffing sticks that are about 24" long, but for small toys, the 10" length is sometimes more convenient. And since I keep a few of the sticks in a pencil cup – actually in every pencil cup – they are always right at hand.



I also use the sticks as stirrers for small pots of paint or glue.

The flat end actually works better than a length of dowel for stirring up paint, and since the sticks are disposable, I can

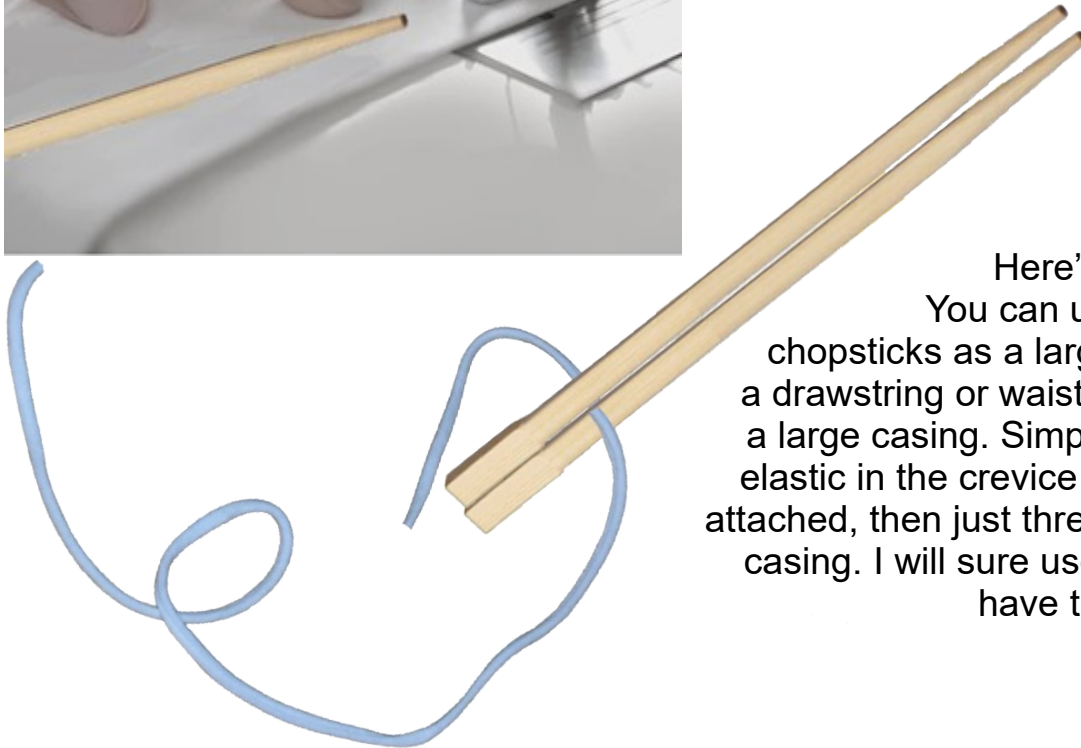
feel okay about discarding them should they be too soiled to save for other jobs. (I do re-use them for as long as I can).

These are obvious uses for a smooth 10-inch stick, but their usefulness goes well beyond these tasks. Here are a few of the other ways I've made use of these handy sticks.



A chopstick is also handy for managing difficult fabrics as you sew; for example, it can help bulky fabrics feeding smoothly, or keep knits or silky fabric from curling over the pressure foot as you sew.

It can also be used to hold items in position in an embroidery hoop, all while keeping fingers clear of the needle



Here's a tip I saw on line:
You can use the unseparated chopsticks as a large bodkin for pulling a drawstring or waistband elastic through a large casing. Simply catch the string or elastic in the crevice where the sticks are attached, then just thread them through the casing. I will sure use this tip when I next have to restring a hoodie!

Although chopsticks can serve as handy small tools, they can also serve as raw material for crafts and projects, and are easily cut with a hand-held cutting tool like these AnvilCut snips.



In fact, wasn't it just last week that I used lengths of chopstick to replace the broken supports in this sewing machine case?
Perfect!

If you follow my projects, you might also remember that I used chopsticks as uprights in my home-made thread holders that I use with large cones on my sewing machines.

When my vintage sewing machines are missing a spool holder post, as they sometimes are, I can cut a replacement from a chopstick, as I did for this Singer 201K.



I cut the stick to length, then friction-fit the pointed end into the hole until it stays put. Sometimes I even give the post a metallic look using a silver paint pen.



Finally, a length of chopstick glued inside a Christmas-striped paper straw makes the pole for this adorable North Pole signpost ornament. I added the signs and the air-dry clay base, and glued a plastic snowflake to the top.

These are only some of the ways I've used chopsticks in my projects, and with time I'm sure there will be many more. Chopsticks really are among the most valuable of "disposable" resources – and they cost me nothing beyond the price of those take-out meals.

