

Using AA Batteries For Fire Starting

By Jaden & Nerisa

We're sure that you all have heard about starting a fire with steel wool and D size batteries. War has an article on it, we've done it and I'm sure many other Rubies have also. The other night we decided to cook hotdogs outside on an open fire. The question was starting it. What method to use? Nerisa thought about trying AA batteries and steel wool to see if they'd work. Do AA batteries have enough power to ignite steel wool?

Build your fire before you light your fire. Have a good wood supply ready. That is said time and time again. Don't light a small fire and then run around trying to find wood to keep it going. Ok, so your fire is built and ready to light. We built our fire in the snow. Scuffed away the worst of it, but there was still ice underneath. The big sticks you see in the pic below are a platform. The fire is built on top of it. This way the dryer lint and small tinder is off the ground. Oxygen can easily get to the fire and the ice won't melt and douse the fire.



Ready to light

All right, let's torch it.



Rayovac NiMh rechargeable batteries

Everybody knows that AA batts are way smaller than D batts. That means they're a lot harder to hang on to while sparking steel wool. We discovered the trick. Unfortunately we weren't really thinking about article-izing it at that point because we didn't think it was going to work too well so we didn't get an outside pic of actually sparking the wool. Sorry...

Wool sparking, take two!

Trying to hold it all like in the pic below is hard. It's hard to maintain contact between the 2 batteries, hold the steel wool on the negative end and then spark the wool on the positive end.



Here's what we figured out. Hold the steel wool against your leg with the battery. (**see note below**) Hold the batteries together and then all you need to do is touch the free end of the wool to the top of the battery. The wool will start to glow orange, gently rub it over the positive. This will help it start burning a little faster.



NOTE: Be careful holding it against you leg. You don't want to get burned. By holding the negative tightly it won't spark, but it might get warm. It'd be better if you found a piece of wood or something to substitute for your leg.

Ok, the wool is lit.



Small piece of wool burning

Look down & left of the brightest orange, that is un-burnt steel wool

The fire WILL travel that way

The un-burnt piece is the negative end

This piece burnt for about 7 seconds. That means that you have 7 seconds MAX to get tinder or something else burning.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!!!!



Completely burnt

Once the wool is burnt, it is useless. It will not burn again.

Back outside!

As soon as the wool gets burning you need to get it into your fire. Be sure to get it under your dryer lint or tinder. It was windy out so we introduced the flaming wool on the UP wind side of the fire. Let the wind work for you by pushing the flames right into your tinder!!! After a little bit more work you'll have a good fire going.



And if you're so inclined you'll have a kick butt supper!



We also tried lighting steel wool using only 1 battery. It didn't work, absolutely nothing happened...note to selves.