



How to Stage a Sword Battle With Your Kids, Percy Jackson Style

By [Jake Woldstad](#)

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Want to bring the mythical world of *Percy Jackson* to life in your own backyard?

Do your kids turn anything they get their hands on into a weapon?

Here's a sword that won't hurt.

This one won't turn into a pen, but you can use it to stage an epic battle of good vs. evil, hero vs. monster or just kids vs. Dad.

In this article I'll show you how to **make an inexpensive (and safe) sword out of PVC and pool noodles so you can duel with your kids**. Recreate battles from *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* books or make up your own family sword-fighting adventure—you and your kids will have lots of fun either way.



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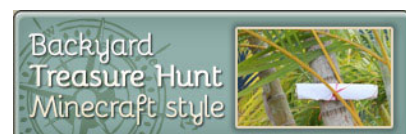
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Why Stage a Sword Battle?

Heroes and their swords are a classic theme in adventure stories—from King Arthur and Excalibur to Luke Skywalker and his lightsaber and even Percy Jackson and Riptide. Sword battles have been used in literature and movies throughout time to represent the struggle and eventual triumph of good over evil.

And as long as kids have been picking up sticks from the ground, they have been **staging their own** versions of these fantastic battles of will and swordplay. It's even better when Mom or Dad plays the role of the big ugly monster!

It's great fun until someone gets hurt.

They won't get hurt with the padded sword I'll teach you how to make below, so you can **let your kids' imaginations run wild**. All you need is a little time, some inexpensive supplies and a space to do battle.

Who's Percy Jackson?

Not familiar with the awesomeness that is *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series?

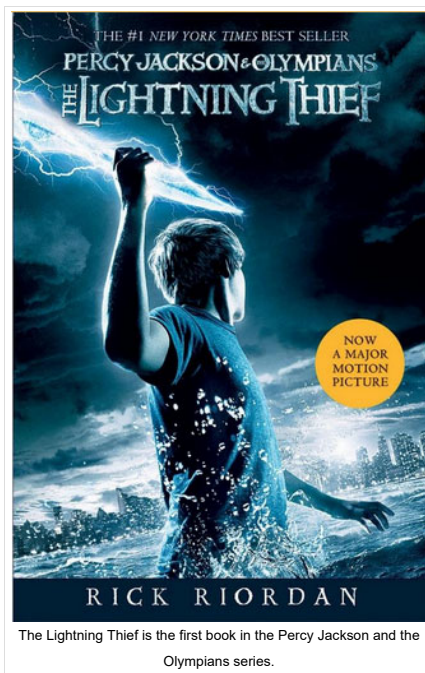
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Here's a glimpse of the first Percy Jackson story.

In *The Lightning Thief*, Perseus "Percy" Jackson is a 12-year-old boy living in New York City when he discovers he is the son of the **Greek sea-god Poseidon**. Five books **chronicle the adventures** he has saving the world from monsters and making friends (and enemies) with other demigods.



Read the Percy Jackson books together. Kids love the non-stop adventure of this series by Rick Riordan and the subsequent movies. Parents love the fact that the stories and characters are all **based on Greek mythology**.

Nearly as strong a character as Percy himself is his sword, **Riptide** (*Anaklusmos* in Greek). When not disguised as a pen, Riptide was used to battle the assortment of monsters confronting Percy and his friends: a **Minotaur**, **Laistrygonian giants**, **Cyclops**, **Empusa**, **Hydra**, **Medusa**, **Sirens**, **Circe the witch** and an ever-expanding cast of monsters sent against Percy and his friends.

Percy Jackson is not impressed (at first, anyway).

The swords, shields, **costumes** and armor worn by characters inspired my kids to make their own armor out of **discarded boxes**.

When my son and daughter started using broom handles and sticks to stage swordfights in their flimsy armor, my wife and I decided they needed safer "weapons" to do battle. We figured out a way to **create swords from PVC and pool noodles that allow them to attack each other in a less dangerous way**.

Here's what you need to make your own Percy Jackson sword:

You Will Need

- 1 PVC pipe (usually sold in 10-foot [3 m] lengths in the United States). We used 1-inch diameter pipe
- Pool noodles—foam tubes used as floating toys in pools
- Utility knife or strong scissors to cut the pool noodle
- Handsaw to cut the PVC
- Miter box (optional)
- Duct tape

Preparation Time

20-30 minutes to make the sword

Activity Time

Your kids will want to play with their swords all day long

Location

I recommend outdoors, but if you have a large room free from fragile items, that could work as well. Just don't blame me if something breaks!

#1: Mine the Celestial Bronze (Gather the Right Materials)

Percy's sword, Riptide, was made of Celestial Bronze, a material that could affect immortal creatures and gods. The **materials you use for your sword are important**, too. They will affect how much power your sword delivers and therefore how likely someone is to get hurt.



Gather the proper tools for the job. This is a good project to teach kids to use a handsaw.

Avoid rigid materials like wood, metal or hard plastics. Their rigid nature may allow them to stay stiff and behave more like a real sword, but this also makes them more dangerous, since they deliver more energy to the opponent.

Instead, **use flexible materials including foam, PVC and duct tape.** I'll show you how to make the blade of your sword from foam so that it's soft and flexible enough to be safe, yet strong enough to fight a good battle.



Pool noodles are the key to keeping the swords safe.

Look for the thickest pool noodles you can find. **Choose the kind with a hole down the middle.** Three inches (7.6 cm) in diameter is about right. You can make these swords out of skinnier noodles or foam pipe insulation, but these will provide less padding and increase the likelihood of someone getting hurt.



PVC pipe is strong enough for a good sword fight and flexible enough to make a safe sword for kids.

PVC, a semi-rigid piping used in plumbing, is available in most hardware stores and

lumberyards. It will be used to **give your sword some rigidity so that the foam won't collapse or bend** during a sword fight. **Select a diameter of PVC slightly larger than the hole running through your foam tube.** (Ours was 1 inch [2.5 cm] PVC).

High-temperature PVC is also available, which is used for the delivery of hot water. We are not concerned with the high temperature tolerance of this type of PVC, but it can be used in place of regular PVC piping. This material is less rigid than PVC, which can help with shock absorption.



Duct tape is strong and waterproof—great for making swords.

Use duct tape to hold the pool noodles to the PVC frames. Plain **silver duct tape** is fine, but your kids may want to use the varied **colors or patterns** available to customize their swords and make them truly their own.

#2: To the Forges of Hephaestus! (Make Your Sword)

Hephaestus is the Greek god of forges, fire, technology, craftsmen, sculptors, volcanoes and blacksmiths. You will need to **enter his workshop to make a proper Greek sword** worthy of your little heroes.



Make a sword worthy of a demigod like Percy. Then stage an epic battle against an evil monster (that's you!).

It may require some trial and error to **find the correct length for your sword.** Start too long and shorten as needed. My son and daughter are similar in height, just under 5 feet (1.5 m) tall. We made their swords 34 inches long (86 cm).



Cut the PVC longer than you think you'll need. You can always make it shorter!

Measure the PVC and mark it at the length you want.

Make your (adult) sword the same length as the kids' swords or shorter.

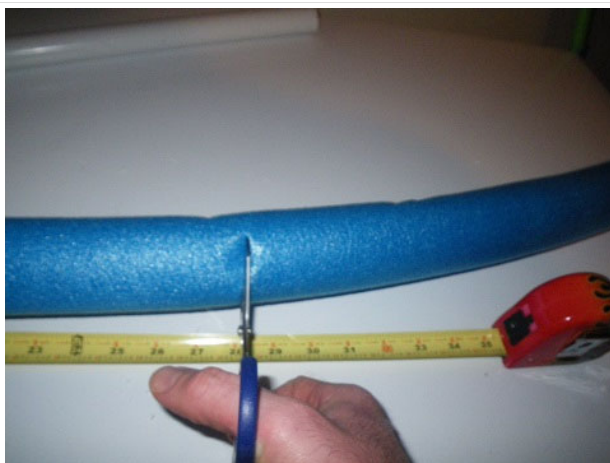
Generally, an adult has an advantage in coordination, patience and being able to anticipate attacks. If you have a much longer sword than the kids (in addition to longer reach), they won't be able to hit you with their swords. That quickly takes away their enjoyment.



Use a miter box to help make a straight cut.

Cut all the way through the pipe using the handsaw. Do not give in to the temptation to cut halfway and snap the pipe. This could result in a jagged edge, which will end up hurting someone. **Use a miter box to create a square cut across the pipe.** An uneven cut can create a sharp point if it breaks.

This is a great project to **teach kids to use a handsaw properly.**



Use the measuring tape to cut at the right spot.

Measure and cut the "blade" of your sword from the foam. Make it six inches shorter than the length of the PVC pipe to allow room for the grip. We cut our foam to 28 inches (71 cm). Use a utility knife or strong scissors to cut the pool noodle.

Optional: To add a pommel to the end of the grip, **cut a 2-inch piece from the foam.** Push it on the end of the grip.



Push the PVC through the hole in the pool noodle.

Push the PVC pipe through the hole in the pool noodle to give your sword some rigidity. It will require some effort to **force the pipe through the hole in the foam tube**, but the tight fit will help keep the foam in place on the sword.



Feed the pipe all the way to the end of the noodle. The other side will have 6 inches (15 cm) of uncovered pipe to use as a grip.

Push the pipe all the way to the end of the foam. There will be a 6 inch (15 cm) section of PVC not covered by the pool noodle sticking out one end.



Wrap duct tape around the whole thing. Let kids decorate their sword with colored duct tape.

Cover the entire sword with duct tape. This will secure the foam to the PVC. If you have multiple colors of duct tape, your kids can decorate their "blades" to match their own personalities.

#3: To the Arena! (Stage Your Sword Battle)

Now that you and your kids are armed with swords, it's time to face off in the arena. **Go**

to a safe place where there are no tripping hazards or items that can be broken, knocked off shelves or knocked into things that will break.



Stage an epic battle of heroes vs. monsters. Kids get to be the heroes, of course!

You can **reenact one of the battle scenes from Percy Jackson** or make up your own story.

As an adult, I am significantly larger than my kids so I **play the role of the monsters Percy and his friends fight against in the books**. If my son or daughter hits a limb with their swords, I can no longer use that limb until I have either been defeated (body blow) or I defeat them by hitting their bodies.



Sometimes my kids let me win.

Before you play, **lay out clear ground rules on the use of the swords**:

- Never hit your opponent in the head.
- Do not use the swords when you are angry.
- Do not poke your opponent in the eye (should be obvious, given rule #1).
- Only use when supervised by an adult.
- Stop immediately when any opponent says to stop.

It's so much fun—you and your kids will love this game.

Some Final Thoughts...

Battling like Percy Jackson is a great family activity, and can **give your kids a way to identify with the characters in the stories** even more.

They will quickly **learn how difficult it is to defend themselves, attack, counterattack and defeat "monsters."**



A sword battle is a great way to spend time outside as a family.

It's a surprisingly intense workout for adults, too.

Follow these simple instructions today to start your own ancient Greek armory and stage a battle of mythical proportions, just like Percy Jackson!

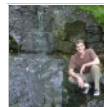
What do you think? Are there any Percy Jackson fans at your house? I'd love to hear about the sword fights you stage with your kids. Please leave a comment or a picture of your sword below.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR, [Jake Woldstad](#)

[Jake Woldstad](#) is a father of two from Wisconsin who inspires and empowers people to live active lives. Jake has a family of outdoor enthusiasts who love adventures. Join us! **Other posts** by [Jake Woldstad](#) »



- <http://www.mykidsadventures.com/> [Jennifer Ballard](#)

Thanks, Jake! My boys love the Percy Jackson books and swords, too. We made something similar for a Star Wars birthday party and gave the "light sabers" to the guests as party favors. For weeks, the parents were asking where I got them or how I made them. They wanted more for the siblings! Super fun activity...

- <http://www.intensityforlife.com/> [Jake Woldstad](#)

Thanks, Jennifer! We knew something like this was necessary when our son came in with the remnants of a metal broom handle he had been using. It had broken off and had several sharp edges.

These swords get used frequently, and now that we have 3, this "monster dad" doesn't last long in 2-on-1 battles.

- *Scott*

Great idea! I especially like the idea of letting them "decorate" with duct tape (which is now available in more colors than when I was young)

- *<http://www.intensityforlife.com/> Jake Woldstad*

You got that right, Scott! Not too long ago, my son bought three or four different rolls of tape with different patterns on them. He really got into decorating his sword and started making other items with duct tape.

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