

4. Yoyos

Artist Workshop

Zhang Guoliang learned to make yo-yos from his family and is a third generation artist of the craft. At one point his grandfather supported his family by making yo-yos. He is one of fifty-four artists in his district.

Artist at Work

Variety is key to yo-yos, and their sizes and shapes have grown more diverse with time. While yo-yos were originally made solely from bamboo, other materials are often used now. Since 1990, the diameters of yo-yos have increased. Zhang makes yo-yos with one and two wheels, and some of his yo-yos have perforated edges that create a whistling sound. The length of time it takes to make a yo-yo varies. Some yo-yos take seven days to make, Zhang says, though he can also make ten in seven days.

Cultural Heritage

Families have used yo-yos for fun and recreation for over one thousand years. Although they are called “yo-yos” in the West, the traditional Chinese name for them appropriately means “empty bamboo.”