

The original thrown weapons were stones, this was simple and didn't lend itself to sophistication. The first sophistication in this area came with spears.

Spears probably developed from a basically defensive prodding stick or light club. The end could be sharpened and hardened in a fire and used for poking. Its offensive potential, however, is only realised when it becomes a projectile. A marriage of this idea with the sharpened rock led to spear tips and more effective spears. The spear range is limited but it can be increased with the introduction of a woomera to "lengthen" the arm and so the distance thrown.

The next development to increase range was to use the potential energy of a bow. This was developed within the last thirty thousand years, as the Aborigines did not have it. This requires a light and very sharp projectile, the arrow. Because of its lightness it was prone to lose direction and so the development of feathers for the tail became necessary for direction.

The blow dart has survived only in two areas of the world as a weapon, South East Asia and South America, as these are ideal habitats for a weapon that needs to be used in the confined space of a forest. It is quiet, but requires a pharmacological knowledge for the poisoned tip. It can be seen as a forerunner of modern weapons in that it uses the expansion of gases to propel the missile.

Rotational energy rather than potential or muscular energy can be used to great effect with slings and boomerangs. Slings involve some expertise in handling to prevent backfiring, but once mastered were extremely efficient advances on a thrown stone. The boomerang in its most form, the non-returning boomerang, gave the advantage of a flat trajectory and also the extra clout from the rotational energy.