

BUMPS DOWN AND DIRTY. Making the Mold

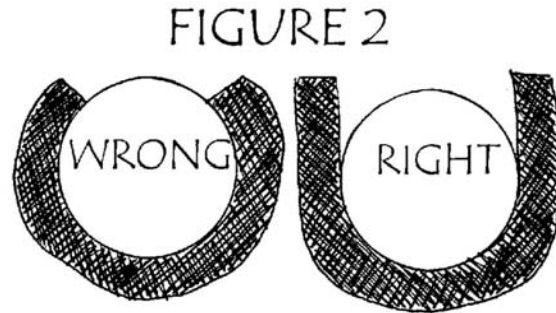
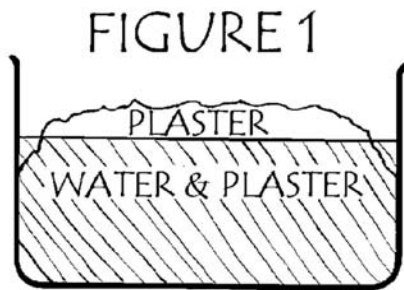
You'll need: Vaseline
Latex gloves
A cheap 1" paintbrush
Plaster of Paris (or one of the more expensive harder plaster formulas, such as hydrocal)
1-2 pks of plaster bandage (art, craft or hobby stores)
Disposable containers, one for dipping bandage, one for mixing plaster
Saran wrap
Reclining lawn chair
Grubby clothes, towels and drop cloths for chair table and floor
A buddy--great help at this stage, in fact, I find this a great group activity

Set up the mold making materials--once you start working with the plaster and bandage, you want to be ready to continue till you're done. Cut or tear the bandage into 12-14" strips and stack them where they won't get wet.

Recheck the edges of the clay. Remember that the more you "feather" the edges to your skin, the more natural the transition will be. To protect exposed skin, apply a liberal coat of Vaseline to your face, and to any exposed hair, eyelashes, beards, etc. This will keep the skin safe from the drying effects of the plaster used for the mold, and will make any facial hair trapped by the plaster easier to release. The Vaseline may also be used to help feather the edges of the clay to the face. Just make sure you haven't messed up any wrinkles in the process.

Prepare yourself or your victim (oops--buddy) by draping with towels. Recline in the lawn chair with a small support just behind your neck. This keeps the back of your head & hair from distorting the mold. Plan that your eyes will get covered up by plaster or bandage. The best way to shut them is lightly, gently. They seal best that way. If you scrunch them up tight, liquid can still get in, and you'll distort the mold. Keep a towel on hand to catch drips.

Have your buddy mix up about 2 cups of plaster product. Measure out about 1 cup of water into the disposable container. Sprinkle in 1-2 cups of plaster until it mounds above the surface of the water (fig. 1). Stir until it is blended and is as thick as heavy cream. You may have to add more plaster--watch for lumps. Lay a 1/4" layer of plaster on the clay, dripping it on with the brush, making sure no air is trapped in undercuts, and covers your face and head at least 1" beyond the clay edges. The plaster will be soft at first and will have to be coaxed away from pooling in low areas. As it starts to set, wait a bit and be ready to add plaster bandage. (If you are doing this solo, you may have to omit this step and go straight to the bandage.)



Take the bandage in double layers, dip them in water, squeeze slightly, and, starting in the center of the clay, massage the bandage into all of the crevices, forcing any air bubbles out. Do this gently over the plaster layer, but make sure there is good contact.

As you add strips to the mold, overlap the edges. Finish one whole layer, and then do the next layer in the opposite direction. When you get to the outer edges of the mold, fold the bandage to make a thicker, stronger edge. I recommend at least 3 layers of bandage. You may wish to finish up with a last layer of plaster, to smooth out any rough surfaces. The stuff heats as it sets and the mold will be ready to remove 10-15 minutes from application of the final layer. Relax, and think of it as a mud pack beauty treatment. That makes it even funnier when you finally emerge.

Gently ease the mold off your face. Chances are that the clay will come, too, as well as the bald cap or stocking you used to contain your hair. If you are making latex skin prosthetics, your mold is almost done and you can skip this next part.

If you want to make urethane foam bumps, you'll need an inner mold that is a positive of your face. Gently remove the bald cap or stocking cap from the mold and look at the clay inside. You may have to add more clay to smooth out areas that never contacted your face. At this point, check the shape of the outer mold, beyond the clay. If it is more than 1/2 circle in shape, you may have problems separating the inner and outer molds when they are done. (fig. 2) You may have to do some trimming, or gentle opening of the mold before it hardens completely. Other sticking spots are the depressions in the mold made by your own nostrils. Take some clay and level the depressions, but avoid the clay in the mold just above your nostrils, or trimming the finished prosthetic will be awkward. (fig. 3)

FIGURE 3

A diagram of a nose mold. A dashed line outlines the 'ACTUAL NOSE CONTOUR'. Below it, a solid line shows the 'MOLD' with a layer of 'CLAY' inside. An arrow points to the clay. The area between the clay and the mold is labeled 'FILL HERE'.

Coat all exposed plaster edges inside the mold with Vaseline. As an added barrier, you may want to cover exposed plaster with saran wrap pieces. Then, using the same process as the outer mold, build up the inner mold. I imbed a dowel rod across the inside of the inner mold to aid in separating the molds later (like a handle). Once everything has set hard, gently pull the molds apart

Now, back to our regularly scheduled program. Is everybody back with me? Remove the clay, (for foam bumps, save the clay to measure the volume later) wipe the Vaseline off all surfaces, and check for flaws. Look for unexpected dents, creases near the eyes and pockets made by little bubbles that should be filled. Omit this step, and your bumps will have warts. Remember that anything that goes in now will stick out in the finished object. Mix up small batches of plaster using a bit more water in the mix than before-- the surrounding plaster may wick away some of the moisture. The smoother you make the repairs, the less sanding you'll do later. This is also the time to trim off rough edges on the mold(s) with a utility knife. Cover any exposed threads of bandage with plaster. Then let the mold pieces dry completely.

Next time, we cast the prosthetic. See you then!