

BEAUTIFYING YOUR SMILE

—Oops!—Snarl

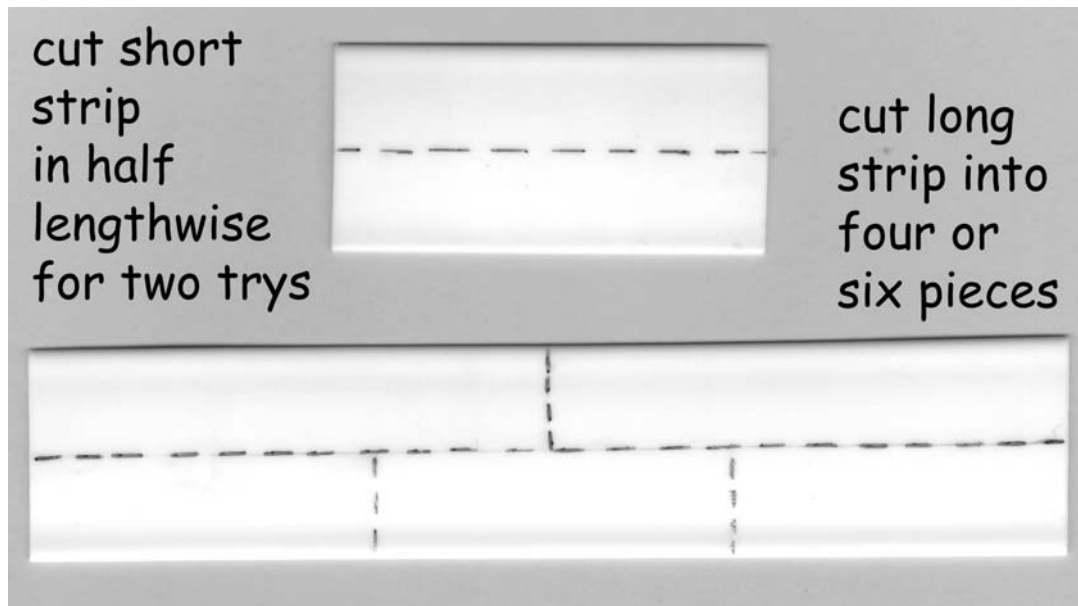
There's nothing less imposing than a Klingon with white, even teeth. When I first discovered I was a Klingon, I asked my dentist how much it would cost to have Klingon looking prosthetic upper teeth made. At the time, ten years ago, he quoted me around \$250. Thanks, but no thanks! The fake teeth sold in most costume shops fit very poorly, and you can't speak with them in your mouth. I have seen ads for "Billy Bob Teeth", and I have heard that they can be molded to your own, but they may still be a mouthful and hinder speech. (If anyone has used this type of prosthetic teeth, I'd like a review).

I did work out an inexpensive way to make really funky teeth on a shoestring budget.

You'll need:

- A mirror
- A source of very hot water (i use an electric coffee server)
- A small dish of cool water
- A pair of tweezers
- A pair of utility scissors (don't borrow your mate's or mom's sewing scissors, unless pain is something you enjoy!)
- An Exacto™ knife or small breakaway utility knife
- Jeweler's needle files (optional)
- An emery board with rough and smooth sides. (normally used for grooming fingernails)
- Brown acrylic paint and q-tips to use as applicators
- Paper towels to catch drips
- And, the magic ingredient, several strips of friendly plastic™. (sold in most craft and hobby stores)

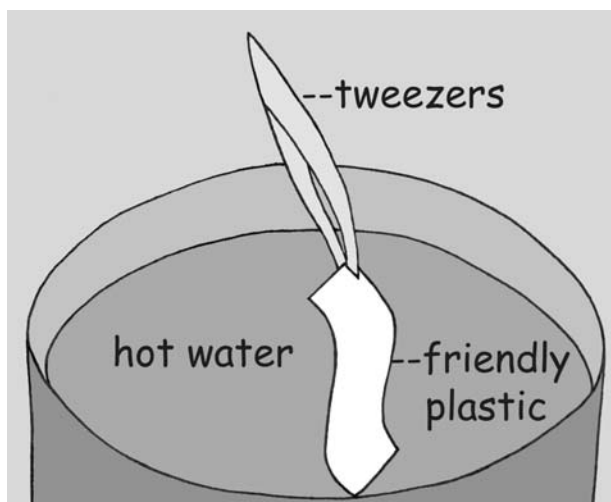
Friendly Plastic™ comes in several sizes, but the most common ones are 1¼ inch by 7 inches and 1¼ inch by 3 inches. The longer stick usually costs around \$1.00 and the shorter one costs around \$.50. Buy several long sheets, in plain white, if you can find it, with the back in white, if you can't. Actually, I'd love to find the stuff in an ivory color, but so far it hasn't happened. Cut each strip in half lengthwise. The shorter strips will make enough plastic for two attempts. The longer strips will make enough for four attempts.



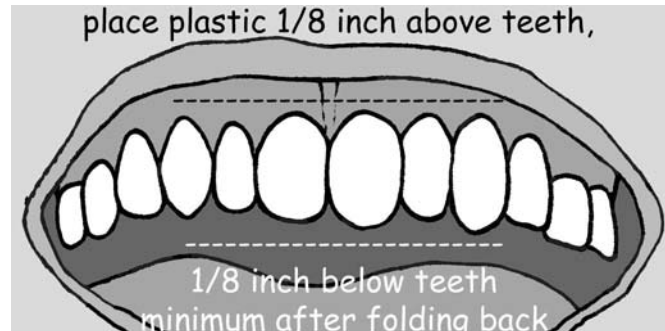
Friendly Plastic™ softens in very hot water, almost boiling, and quickly stiffens as it cools. The tricky part is to heat it up enough to form but not so much that it becomes a puddle of goo. It does not reheat well, and does not adhere to itself easily, so timing is everything. Expect to mess up a few times before you get the rhythm of the process.

READ THESE STEPS OVER BEFORE STARTING. This has to be done in a continuous motion.

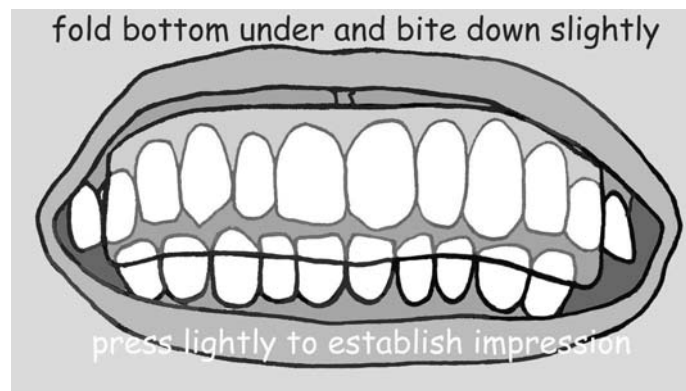
- 1) Lay out all your tools and materials on a heat resistant, waterproof table or tray. Position yourself so that you can see your mouth in the mirror, and can reach both the hot water pot and the dish of cool water. Set the hot pot to nearly boiling. Pick up a strip of plastic by a corner using the tweezers and immerse it into the hot water until it is soft enough to wave slightly when moved in the water.



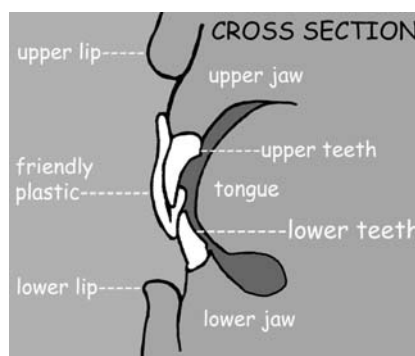
- 2) Dampen the fingers of your empty hand with cool water. This keeps the warm plastic from sticking to your skin. Look into the mirror and place the plastic over your upper front teeth. You want the plastic to go above your teeth a bit onto the gum line and still hang below your teeth at the bottom.



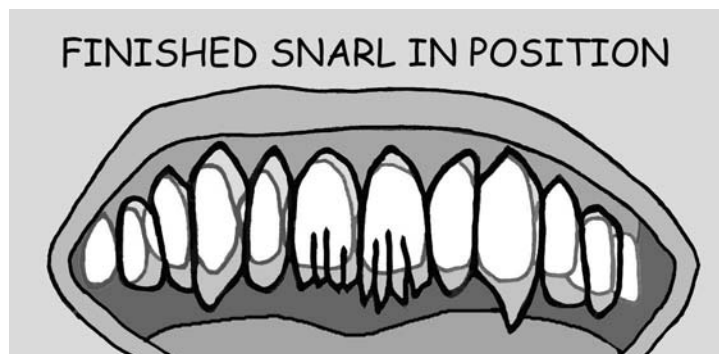
- 3) Immediately fold some of the bottom overhang behind your teeth. Then bite down slightly, but not all the way and gently press the plastic against your teeth. Don't press too hard, though. You want to capture the impression of your teeth and still leave material you can carve into the new, funky teeth. The fold does not have to be terribly even, after all, you want the new teeth to look nasty and crooked.



- 4) Wait. The Friendly Plastic™ will shrink as it cools, and should fit you very well by the time it sets, only a minute or two.

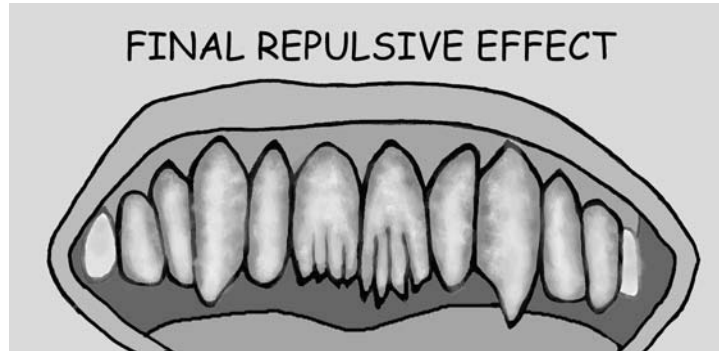


- 5) Examine the impression.
 - Did your own teeth get completely covered?
 - Is there plenty of material below your natural bite line?
 - Are there any thin spots? You can see them when you hold the impression up to a light.
- 6) Repeat the steps above several times and see if you can improve on previous efforts. Your goal is to get an impression that extends no more than 1/8 inch above your teeth and more than 1/8 inch below your teeth without losing any material on the surface of your teeth.
- 7) Practice carving on one of the so-so impressions. Use the Exacto™ or breakaway knife to whittle away the plastic a little at a time. Be careful, these knives are sharp! Where you have the material, do not follow the creases made by your natural teeth, and don't make the new creases straight up and down. You want an orthodontist to rub his hands in glee at the cost of correcting your new crooked smile. Make your canines worthy of a vampire. One Klingon I know had hers made with grooves on the main incisors (front teeth). Whatever you do, though, don't carve too deep. This will weaken your new snarl, and you'll end up starting over. Carve the upper outline of your new teeth, making sure your actual teeth are still covered. You may also trim away excess plastic behind your teeth, leaving just enough to keep 'em hooked onto your own.



- 8) Once the new teeth have been roughed in, smooth them out some with the jeweler's needle files and emery board. You don't want them to be perfectly smooth, because they'll need staining with the acrylic paint and if they're too smooth, the paint won't stick. If you don't smooth 'em enough, you'll irritate the inside of you upper lip. Wear 'em around a bit before you stain them, and you'll find the rough spots!
- 9) Thin down the acrylic paint with a little water and apply to the teeth with a Q-tip. The color will settle in low spots. Blot the high spots a

bit when the paint gets tacky. You still want them to be whitish, sorta. If you can, pick a yellowish brown, like an ochre, or mix some yellow ochre into the brown in places. That should look awful, like a dental hygienist's nightmare! For those of you afraid of putting paint in your mouth, I have found that soaking them in a cool solution of strong coffee and tea overnight will stain as well, but that tastes worse than the paint!



- 10) Once your new teeth are dry, rinse them well in cool water. They'll taste terrible the first time you wear them, but acrylic paints are made non-toxic, so I think you'll survive.
- 11) Put them in and SNARL for the camera! You're terrifying!