

PLASTER FACE CASTS---THE EAST WAY!!

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Supplies

Quick set plaster bandages
Length of soft aluminum wire or solder
Corrugated cardboard (from a box)
approximately 12"x 15"
Plaster of Paris or Hydrocal
Petroleum Jelly (Vaseline)

Equipment

Old towels
Plastic drop cloth
Sharpie
Rubber bald cap or swim cap or plastic
wrap
Comfortable chair
Water bucket
Craft scissors
Latex gloves

Making a negative mold

Cut plaster bandages into a variety of shaped pieces. You'll need some pieces that are full width and about 3 1/2" long, some smaller squares and some triangles. Keep bandages dry before use.

With a length of soft aluminum wire or solder, determine the outline of the subject's face. Wrap the wire gently around the face and twist ends together at top of head.

Remove wire and trace outline onto the center of cardboard rectangle. Cut along line to create opening.

Test fit the opening on the subject's face. Adjust as necessary—make larger by cutting, fill too large openings with small pieces of paper towel rolled into a cylinder.

Place rubber wig cap on subject's head to cover hair. Tuck loose strands under cap. Ask the subject to remove contact lenses during this process.

Apply Vaseline to entire face. Do not neglect eyelids and lashes. Keep Vaseline out of the eyes, but coat lids, lashes and everything else completely.

Replace cardboard shield around face and position subject in a comfortable position. Do not allow subject to recline completely, but keep in a semi-upright position so that features do not distort. Make sure that they are comfortable enough to remain for 20-30 minutes. Plug any gaps in the cardboard shield with rolled tissues or cotton pads.

Starting around outside of head and overlapping the cardboard shield, apply bandages to face. Dip the bandage pieces into the water bucket and allow to drip dry. DO NOT wring the pieces because this removes too much of the plaster. Lay bandages onto face and gently smooth into place. Overlap pieces slightly but do not build up layers at this time.

Continue around face then work toward the center. Fold a small piece of bandage to bridge between the nostrils. DO NOT cover the nostrils. Gently push bandage into corners of eyes. Remember that the FIRST layer is what will make the mold. Additional layers should be smoothed down, but really only provide support for the first layer.

Once the entire face is covered (EXCEPT the nostrils) apply a second layer. Pay attention where you start and stop because it is easy to lose track of the number of layers applied. Continue process with a third layer. Blot any excess moisture with a clean, absorbent towel.

You can work more quickly on the second and third layer. The first layer creates the mold, the second and third strengthen the mold.

Allow to cure completely before removing from subject. Time varies dependant on temperature and humidity. Keep subject comfortable while mold is curing. DO NOT leave subject unattended at any time. Remind them that you are nearby in case they feel uncomfortable or nervous. The plaster bandages may feel slightly warm to the subject while they are curing.

Remove the mold. Ask the subject to lean forward and gently flex face. Hold the mold in place and allow it to fall free into your hands. Lay it face up to continue curing and drying.

Clean up subject's face with soap and water. Recommend a moisturizing cream after thorough cleansing.

Mark subject's name on the cardboard shield. Many faces look alike in negative form.

Casting a positive

Make sure mold is fully cured and dry. Do not rush this part of the process.

Apply mold release in negative cavity. Use spray mold release, liquid dish soap or Vaseline.

Cradle mold in styro peanuts, rolled towels or wadded newspaper to keep in level position.

Mix Hydrocal A-11 according to manufacturer's recommendation. (45 parts water to 100 parts dry Hydrocal by weight) <http://www.plaster.com/HYDROCAL.html>

Pour mixed Hydrocal slowly into mold. Tap mold gently to release trapped air bubbles.

Allow to set until slightly thick. Position bent wire at center back near top as a hanger. Scribe initials and date in wet cement for future reference.

When completely cured, remove mold by peeling from positive cast. Be careful not to damage positive mold.

Allow mold to continue drying and curing before using. Trim or remove imperfections with sandpaper, dental tools or files. Shellac or varnish as desired.

Supplies

Plaster Bandage

<http://www.artmolds.com/category55.cfm>

<http://www.edlpm.com/plascasban3i.html>

http://www.smooth-on.com/Life-Casting-Gypso/c3_1186/index.html?catdepth=1

<http://www.bhigr.com/store/product.php?productid=406>

Hydrocal

<http://www.plaster.com/HYDROCAL.html>

<http://www.gypsumsolutions.com/htmlID/hydrocal.asp>

IGC Technologies
4039 West Green Tree Rd.
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
414-540-1300

Meyer Materials
633 S. 84th St.
West Allis, Wisconsin 53214
414-476-5310

Things to think about

- Prepare carefully: make sure that you have all supplies ready to go BEFORE you start to plaster the subject's face.
- Think about the room and environment from the subject's point of view
- Keep distractions (for you and the subject) to a minimum
- Do not tell jokes or try to be "funny" while subject is being cast
- Find a quiet, comfortable space to work.
- Develop a level of trust between you and your subject. While they are "under" speak in a quiet, calm, confident manner. Talk to them often and let them know what you are going to do BEFORE you do it. All of their senses will be heightened during the process. Ask them frequently if they are feeling OK.
- Let them know that you will not leave them alone during the process
- Assure them that they can, at any time they feel uncomfortable, lean forward and you will remove the mask.
- Develop a system to communicate during the time the subject cannot speak—they can voice positive or negative sounds without moving their face.
- Make sure that water or plaster doesn't leak around edges of cardboard mask into subject's ears.
- After removing the cast, the subject may feel disoriented or faint. Check their condition and status and give them a few moments to "recover." Have a clean, warm, damp towel ready.
- The subject may need help in cleaning their face. Use lots of soap and warm water. Recommend that they use a moisturizer after the process.
- Use standard safety practices when mixing plaster or Hydrocal. Clean up afterward.
- Remember that if you drip plaster from the bandages or the mold fill on terry towels, you cannot remove the hardened plaster later and the towel will be ruined.