

Activity M2 (Archaeology)

Dig It Up! Excavation Blocks

Suitable for ages 5 plus with adult help.



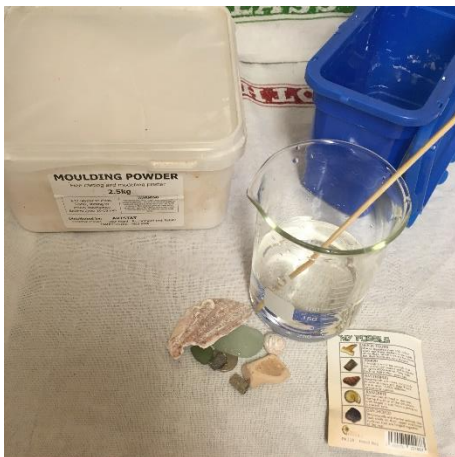
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Learning and Outreach Role
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This is a simple but effective activity, all you need is:

- plaster of Paris
- some small items (shells, coins, fossils, toys like plastic bugs, pretty stones etc)
- a plastic container to use as a mold (bottles, fruit/biscuit/cake trays)
- wooden tools (skewers, toy tools, toothpicks)



Step 1 – Add your plaster powder to fresh water as per the instructions or until you have a consistency like thick cream.

Top Tip: For mixing use a beaker that you're not bothered about ruining!



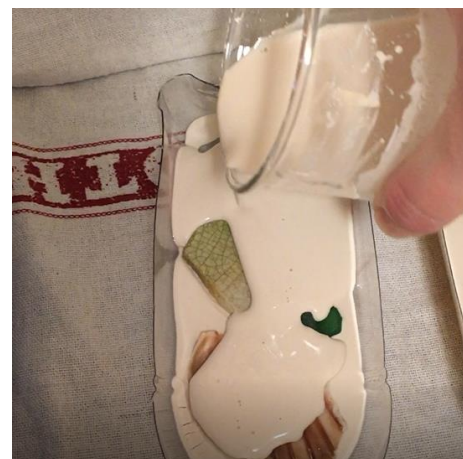
Step 2 – Pour your plaster into your container to a depth of about 1 cm and let it set a little.

Top Tip: I cut juice bottles in half – they were just deep enough and the block popped out easily when set.



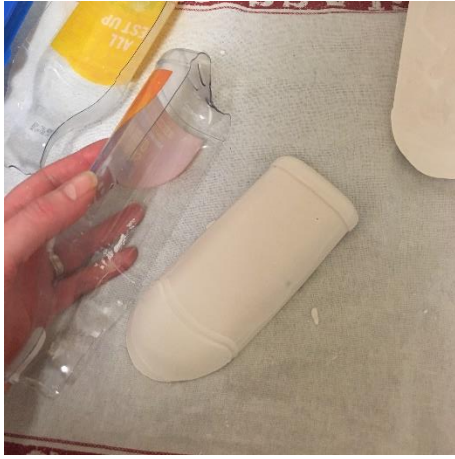
Step 3 – Add your chosen objects to the plaster, you should be able to squish them in a little bit. The plaster will feel **warm** or even hot while setting so please **take care**. What kind of reaction is occurring?

Top Tip: Add water to your plaster beaker to stop any that is left in there setting.



Step 4 – Cover objects with another centimetre or so of plaster and allow to set.

Top Tip: Do not rinse any leftover plaster down the drain – **this is a recipe for clogged drains!** Instead, rinse into the bin or somewhere outside like a gravel patch – be sure to check first!



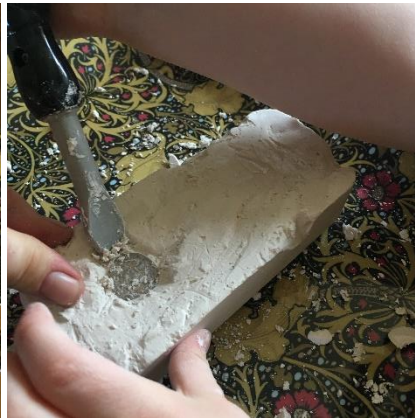
Step 5 – You can pop your block out of the mold once it feels cool to the touch.

Top Tip: They are the best texture for excavation after about 24-48 hours – I found they dried best on a tray on a sunny windowsill.



Step 6 – Get your archaeologist on! Use wooden tools to chip away the plaster to uncover the hidden treasures and surprises. It's a good activity to do outside if you can as it can get a bit dusty.

Top Tip: Pop some old sunglasses or specs on to keep any dusty chips out of your eyes!



We found that toy chisels/hammers (and yes, even diggers!) were useful and fun to use.

An old paintbrush to clean up your finds is handy to have too.

If you use your block straightaway you will find it quite soft but it will dry out over the next couple of days, so you don't need to do it all in one go – we kept coming back to ours and doing a little bit at a time over a week or so.

Don't forget to show us how you got on by sharing your pictures with us using [#ElginMuseumfromHome](#) and tagging us on Instagram and Facebook!