

# Making a Mask

Here is a quick summary of the process. I am sure some details are missed. I learned by trial and error. You can too!

- First I make a plaster cast (negative mould) of a face with plaster bandages.
- Then we coat inside with Vaseline and pour in liquid plaster of paris, let it harden and remove the positive replica of the face.
- Next we apply a thin coat of release agent to the face mould (petroleum jelly)
- Now we can build features (the new face) out of clay, moulding with hands and sometimes small tools for detailed work.
- When the face is moulded, we apply petroleum jelly to the still moist clay.
- Then we apply layers of papier mache.
- The paper I like to work with is thick brown paper with strong fibres.
- Crush and crumple the paper until it is malleable (soft) and will take form easily. Tear (never cut) different sized pieces.
- The mache I like is a mixture of white flour, white glue and water. Wall paper paste is also possible.
- Apply at least three layers allowing time to dry in between layers. (not essential to dry in between layers but it's preferable).
- Use sandpaper to smooth face if desired. Easiest to do this when it is still on the mould.
- Remove the dry paper mask from the mould by turning it over and pulling or digging out the clay.

- Wipe off Vaseline from the inside. Here you may need to let the mask dry from the inside for a while. (wipe off the clay and rehydrate for further use)
- Cut eye holes, nose holes. For these holes, try to trim across the mask from the inside to make an even cut.
- Trim edges. Do this by putting the mask on and looking in a mirror to see when each part of the mask fits the face properly. Trim a little and check again.
- Add fake features like teeth, eyes, lashes as well as screen to cover eye holes if necessary. Do this by using contact cement or hot glue.
- Note - if using table tennis balls for eyes, be careful the hot glue doesn't melt the ball.
- Add wire or string loops for the elastic by putting mask against the face and making sure it will be above the ear. Poke small holes.
- Seal mask with glue on both sides. It is possible to use contact cement but best is a non-toxic, Latex based glue. The desire here is to seal with a rubbery coating so it is more moisture proof and flexible and looks more like skin. Use finger. It ruins brushes (this step is optional)

### Paint mask

- Here is a rough guideline for mixing flesh tone:
  - 1 part green
  - 2 parts yellow
  - 4 parts red
  - 8 parts brown
  - 10 parts white
- Experiment with more or less of each to get the color you like.

- Use darker or lighter versions of this to make highlights and shadows.
- Look in a mirror to see what kind of coloration we have on our faces.
- Use a sponge or finger to blend. Avoid harsh lines.
  
- Glue on eyebrow and moustache hair if desired.
  
- Attach black elastic head band of at least 1cm thick. Sew on one side and leave the other end adjustable to head sizes. Close with an adjustable clasp or safety pin.
  
- It is possible to seal mask with clear varnish. Be sure it is non toxic. Polyurethane based clear sealer is good.

### Summary

I have found this to be a way that anyone can learn.

I have made masks with children's groups this way.

The important part is that they mould the face fairly quickly without censoring themselves.

They should attempt to make it human with recognisable features that match up with our features, (especially the eyes).

The mask should have great emotion.

Use mirrors as reference to how faces look with strong expressions.

\*students usually want to begin by making monsters or pieces of art, but this is just a defence to not express something genuine about themselves. The more human a mask looks the more it can take on a personality that we recognise and can develop.

Best of luck,  
Steve Jarand