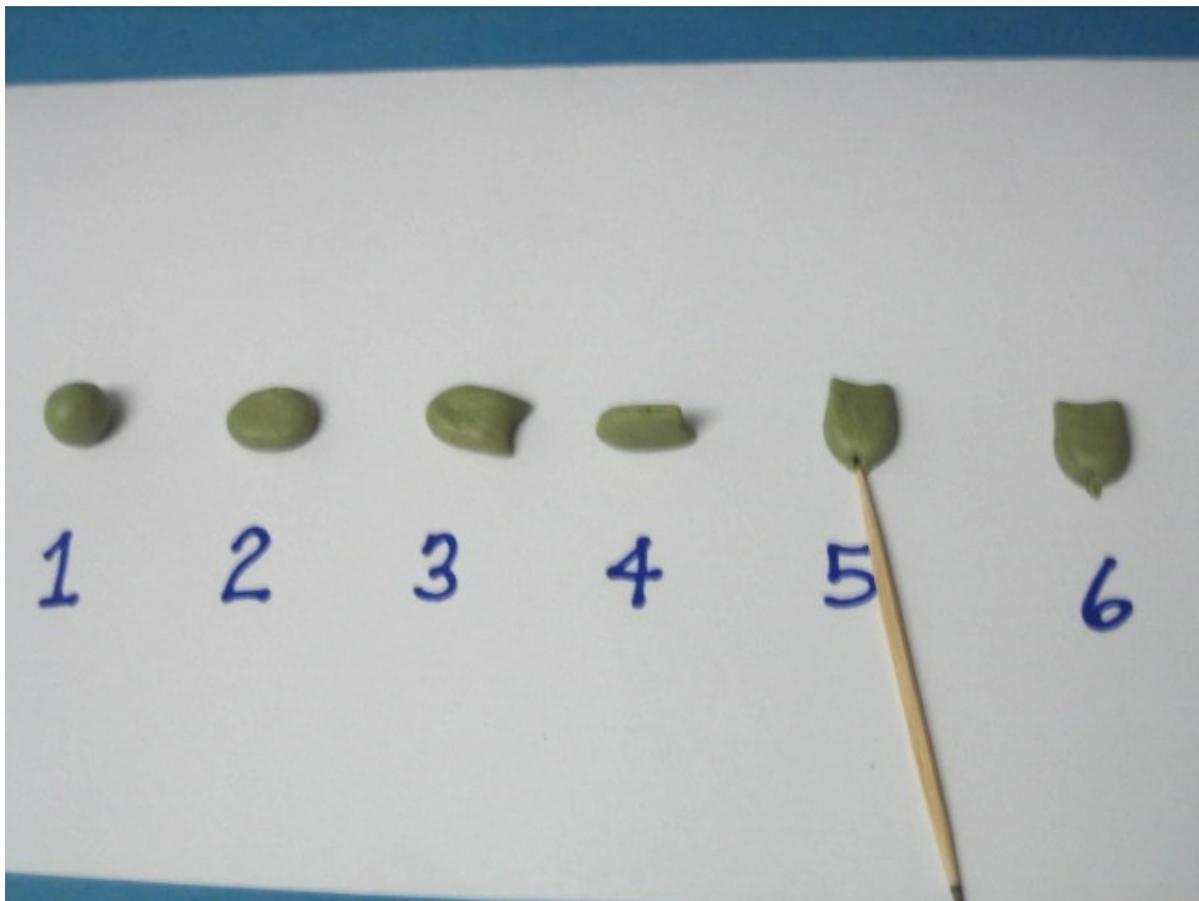


Making Sandbags from Epoxy Putty

Mike Reaves

I've made sandbags from various materials over the years, including Durham's Water Putty before I discovered epoxy putty. It is a very good medium for making items like sandbags. One advantage is that the sandbags can be formed around each other when emplaced, making for a realistic representation of the weight of the bags bearing on one another. The sandbags are easy to form, once you get the hang of it. Check out the photo below. I'll explain.



First, I tear off a portion of epoxy putty from a well mixed and reasonably small batch (No more than can be worked in about 45 minutes). I roll it into a ball slightly larger than an English pea, maybe about the size of a chickpea, if you're familiar with that. Next, I flatten it a little between my fingers to get the shape shown as number 2. Then I gently pinch two corners into one end of the bag with my thumb and forefinger, shaping a little more as I go. It's starting to look a little like a sandbag now.

Figure 4 shows a seam cut into the edge of the bag. It is easily pressed in with an Xacto blade. Good news here, it doesn't have to be all that neat. Also, I normally put the seam into each bag after it is positioned to keep from messing up the detail, but if the sandbag is in a spot that is difficult to access with my knife, I can add the seams before placement. For bags on lower courses of an emplacement, I'd be done at this point. For bags on upper courses, I add a little more detail where the bag is tied up on one end. This is actually rather easy to do, and comes out looking pretty convincing with a little practice. First, I make a dimple in the end of the bag with a toothpick as shown in figure 5. This will leave a little bit of material sticking out at the bottom. That's the end of the bag that's been gathered and tied. After that, I'll come in from each side of the original dimple with the toothpick, elongating the small flap and adding further dimples where the end of the sand bag has been gathered and tied, as shown in figure 6.

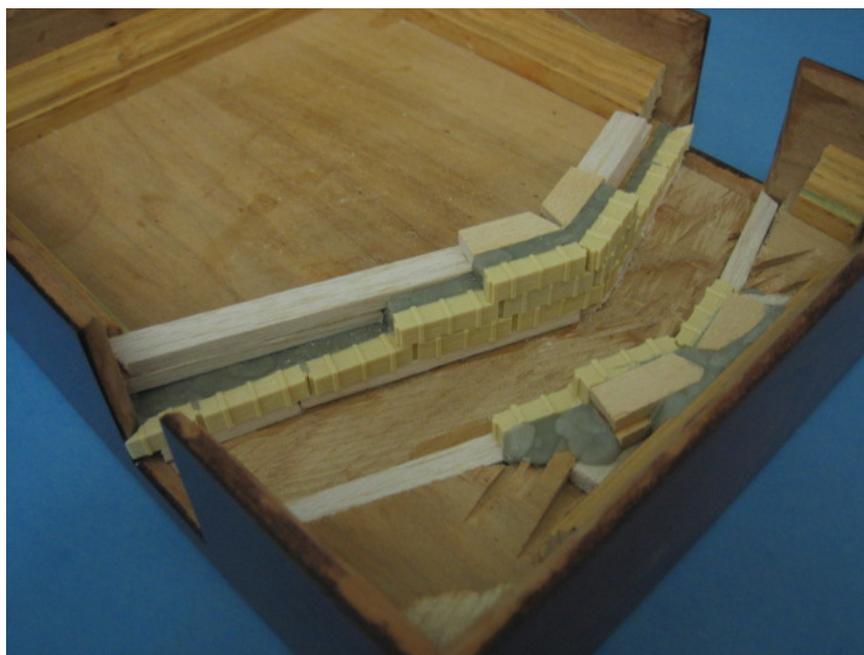
I will then transfer the bag to the emplacement, and finally add a slight amount of texture with my fingers. That's right; my sandbags are textured with fingerprints! The trick is to lightly press in a fingerprint in one direction, then follow up 90 degrees from that, so that there is now only texture, no discernable fingerprint. I've found this to be adequate for 1/35th scale sandbags. Some attempts at texturing I've seen in the past are grossly overscale.

The good news is that I can form a sandbag as shown in figures 1-6 above far faster than it took to read how it's done. You'll want to be careful to make your sandbags more or less the same size. There will be some variation, but not a lot. I keep a 1/35 scale standing figure handy when I'm doing a large emplacement. I usually figure on the sandbags length coming to just above the knee on the figure. About the only place I've seen larger are the famous mealie bags at Roarke's Drift. Otherwise, I keep them to the size I've always seen in gun emplacements, etc. I also stay away from those 1/3 full jobs you see people using when their out sandbagging against floods. I figure their sized so high school kids and old ladies can handle them.

The sandbags are typically laid like bricks, with alternating vertical joints. I will lay in an occasional sandbag at a little bit of an angle, just to keep it interesting, and every once in a while, I'll show a sandbag laid in at 90 degrees to the rest, with it's tied end sticking out. These would be lain in a course if the joints were out of whack, etc. Sometimes old ammo crates might be tied into a sandbag emplacement for strength, especially at corners or on ends of courses. I've shown that in the in progress photos below of the trench section on my Matilda base.



This first photo shows some Armand Bayardi ammo crates I've integrated into the trench section. I split the crates down the middle with my trusty razor saw to yield twice as many crates.



This second photo shows both sides of the trench with crates installed and supporting structure behind them of balsa wood and epoxy putty. The lower courses of sandbags will rest on this support, along with the crates.



Finally, the back wall of the trench is complete. Funny story on the multi-colored sand bags. The lowest courses are made of Apoxie Sculpt Grey Putty. Unfortunately, I ran out. I had some Apoxie Sculpt White that I tried out, but I decided the grain was a little too fine and the putty a little soft for my purposes. So I finally got some Milliput Grey-Yellow Putty, which you see on the top courses. Once I put paint on them, they all look the same. Notice how the sand bags aren't laid in perfectly, and how they've been worked into the edge of the base on either side of the trench. Also notice that I put in the groundwork at the bottom of the trench in advance. It's harder to work down in there once the trench is complete. Learned that one the hard way!

Once the front wall of the trench is complete, the ground work will be laid in up to the trench walls. I've opted to paint all the sand bags tan in this case, but I have seen photos of tan sand bags mixed in with distinctively green shaded sand bags. Makes for an interesting look.

That about does it. Once you get the hang of shaping sand bags, you'll be able to turn out scores of them in no time.