

MINING KITS

SUPPLIES:

Plaster of Paris

Washed Play Sand

Water

Raw gemstones (I used a mix of larger and smaller) I got these from a wholesaler, but you can get them on Amazon

Measuring Cup (I used a 150ml container)

Container to mix

Moulds (I used both disposable aluminium containers and silicone moulds)

Something to mix with

INSTRUCTIONS:

Organise the gemstones ready for the moulds: I used two larger and 3-5 smaller ones per mould.



Mix Plaster with Sand first and then add water to get a thick “pancake batter” consistency. I used 1 part plaster to 4 parts sand to 1 part water however feel free to experiment to find what works best for your child’s age (the more plaster the harder the mix).

This gave us a hard mould that will continue to harden the longer it is left to cure.

Note the mix will set reasonably quickly so I did two moulds at a time.





Half fill each mould and then place the crystals/gemstones in the mix (they shouldn't sink so push them in a little).

Then top with the remaining mix, give a little jiggle to remove air bubbles and leave to set.



They will set quickly but will get harder over time. So as to not have to purchase an excessive number of moulds, I popped mine out as soon as they set (10minutes) and let them fully dry in a single layer on the bench.



We then had mini hammers, picks, clay tools, toothbrushes, sponges, spray bottles with water and finally a few buckets full of clean water for the children to rinse off their finds. We also had magnifying glasses for those that wanted to inspect their finds.



PLASTER TO SAND RATIO NOTES

1:4 seemed to make a good density. A small hammer/pick could be used to break off chunks and then it could be worked at with smaller clay tools. (LEFT)

1:2 was still pretty hard and my 6-year-old struggled with a small metal hammer. (MIDDLE)

I tried a 1:1 mix, and this was so hard that I had to use a proper hammer and whack it hard to break it up (I don't recommend). (RIGHT)

1:5 was more sand-like and would be great if you only wanted to work at it with clay tools, scraping it rather than having to break it up. (NOT PICTURED)



GEMSTONES & OTHER ARTIFACTS NOTES

I also added seashells and rocks that I have collected while beachcombing in the more recent ones I've made (as per mining photos).