

URBAN DEBRIS FOR WARGAMING

'MAKING THE BRICKS'

By Tony Rieger



Safety: The first thing to start with is safety. I feel all these kinds of documents need to start with an acknowledgement to safety. You must follow all the recommendations and safety precautions that appear on all the materials and boxes that the companies state. This project was intended for adults or children under the supervision of adults. The chemicals and the hobby knives are potentially dangerous if misused, so do not *misuse* them. I cannot be held responsible for any of these directions or outcomes from their use, so use them *at your own risk*.

Wargaming Terrain: Most games subject or require terrain to be a part of the wargaming experience.

Others do not. Many of my club games are done in urban settings and we felt we needed terrain to reflect the destruction (and terrain) found in urban conflicts around the world and through the ages. A sparse battlefield was not to our liking, so we took things a bit further. We made loose 'debris' to throw down on our table tops (once everything but troops and tanks were left.) These were bricks, floor boards, rusted and burnt pipes, telephone poles, cars and machinery and even furniture and the like. These are also the *last* things scooped up after the game is over.) In some of our games, the rubble indicates areas that are difficult to cross, or slow units down, but may also supply said unit with a cover bonus that allows them to survive more. In other game rules, there is no convention for this, so the debris merely adds to the 'look' of the game, while having on real 'game' impact on it. In the following article, I will show you how I made the **Bricks** and I hope to make other articles to show you how to make the other elements of debris like the floor boards, telephone poles and the like.

MAKING BRICKS

First step: Area to work in. You'll need an area where you can work. This means paying attention to the fact your not on your mother new dinning table or the like where making a mess (or a big accident) will not be an issue. You will have to have an area to spray paint (outside) as well. Keep in mind, the spray paint can blow around, get on your house, your car etc. so watch out for those hazards as well. You'll need the stuff to dry as well, so this probably should be outside as well. Read the directions on the can. Once you have these areas designated, your read to truly start.

Plenty of Time: This project takes some time to finish. The clay has to dry for awhile, the paint needs to dry for awhile and you'll need plenty of time to cut these things into bits, so its an inexpensive way to make toy bricks, but its time intensive to actually do. You will not be able to completely this project in a few hours. For some, this project will be tedious and will leave many thinking I lost my mind when I did it (I made over a gallon of this stuff!) but if you can stick with it, you will undoubtably be greatly rewarded. Be patient and stick with it. (You might even find it meditative!)



Step One: You need to purchase some self drying modeling clay. **Das™** and **Marblex™** are two types made that I have in the photo. I'm almost certain there are many more companies out there that make the same thing under another name in your area. Red clay make for great bricks, where as the grey clay makes for good cinderblocks or if you plan on making mud-bricks for buildings in the Middle East or Africa etc. The final product will be painted, so you can control what the final outcome is in the end.



Flexibility: One of the benefits to this material (other than its usually nontoxic to use and work with) but because it can be reconstituted if it dries out. This means, even if you mess up on the size of the bricks or the like, you can always go back and place it in a water proof bag with just a little water in it, mush it all together and put it aside. In 24 hours, it will be soft clay again. if you place too much water in (or too little) you can just let it dry out some more (or add yet more water.) This process can go on and on.) The only time this will *not* work as planned is after you add the paint to it. This usually end the process of *going back*.



Prepare the work area: Place your drop cloth, newspaper or the like out onto your work area and a cutting board (for when you start chopping the clay) and a small bowl of water (just in case the clay is kinda dry, or you want to rinse your fingers/ hands a bit, as it can messy and dry out the skin.)



Step Two: Mush it up and flatten it out. I used a baking sheet and a rolling pin (and yes, I made sure I could use it. My wife would not be pleased had I not asked.) The idea behind this mashing it out is that (1) we want the clay soft and pliant and (2) it needs to be flattened out to a 'thin' layer. How thin? For those who are 'exacting' I'd say .5mm thick. But for the rest of you, I'd say "As thin as you need your bricks to be." You might be making bricks for a 54mm soldier diorama or the like. You might be making them for 10mm games. I have no way of knowing, so all you need to keep in mind is the thickness of the clay will be how thick the individual bricks are going to be for your use.

I must also note: This is not an exacting way to make professional looking bricks. Since its all being done by you, by hand, its only going to be as 'exact' as you are able to make it. I did this project more to achieve the look of bricks, but I didn't really care about making them 'scale' to what I use in gaming,

as it can vary allot in scale. I imagine its possible to be very careful and get these to the scale you want, but you'll need steadier hands than I have, and an eye for detail. I found it very hard to get the bricks truly square/rectangular, so I didn't really obsess about it. Upon close inspection, you can see they vary in size and shape allot, which to fine scale modelers, is not acceptable, but for war gamers, is often fine.

NO PHOTO

Step Three: (no photo for this step) Drying it out. Here is the tricky part, drying the clay out ...*enough*. There is no set time because the clay will dry at different rates in different areas (as I do not know where you are drying your clay, nor at what altitude etc. I cannot be specific.) The clay must dry enough, but before it gets actually hard, as once its hard, it cannot be cut without breaking and shattering (and we don't want that.) The idea is to get it so its still soft enough to cut, but without smushing and not so hard the clay shatters (or is hard to cut in the first place.) You might have to experiment with this before you get it right. This is the part of the whole operation thats going to take some time to achieve. Your also going to have to keep an eye on the clay as to how quickly it will dry. Needless to say, it will dry faster in the sun and on dry days and far less so on cooler or humid days. I found my clay needing 12 hours or more before it was in at a usable hardness.



Step Four: Cutting the clay into strips. As you can see from the photo, the clay is cut into strips first. How thick the strips are will of course, determine how thick the bricks are. I cut mine probably about 5mm thick (but i did not actually measure, so it often varied a little. The more precise folks out there can certainly try and make their strips more precise. I wasn't too concerned with mine, so I just 'eyeballed it'.) I cut with an **Xacto™** blade/knife because the blade is very thin and easy to control. It slices through the clay better than a thicker knife, which can also tear the clay more than cut it. (And for you kids, remember to cut on a surface you are allowed to cut on.)



Step Five: cutting the strips into rectangles. Take the strips of clay, and now cut them into smaller rectangles (they should look like 'bricks' to you now.) As you can see in the photo, the size you cut your rectangles determine the size of the bricks. Its up to you how big they are. I kept the end pieces because they looked like broken bricks. The ones that did not I either put in the bag with the rest of the clay for later, or smashed them up ...that made them *really* broken bricks.



(This photo shows a pile of 'bricks' that were cut from the one pan worth of clay. I did this many, many more times until I got the amount I wanted. I'll still be making more in the future.)



Step Six: Painting the bricks. I used some household, common spray paint to paint these bricks. I found that not only is it quickest, but I found any other way (like using acrylic paints) only made the brick become mush. Spray painting is the only way I found that worked for me. Now I take the bricks to be painted and place them into a suitable box. I chose a nice shallow but wide paper box lid to do my spraying it as it allowed as much of the product to be spread out as thin as possible. This will prevent the stuff from clumping up (which is also fine, as bricks then to be in chunks when blown apart by artillery and the like, but the idea for me, was to not have too much that was clumped.

Better to have it be a result once and awhile, rather than set out to clump it all.) Depending on how much 'brick' you have made, you may need to do this several times, or have several box lids to spray into.



Special Step/Tip: I used clay based **Cat Litter** and added it to the bricks. This would make for smaller 'broken' bits of 'brick' in the final product. You can also add the grey or clay colored cat litter to the final product at the end as well to give the look of chunks of mortar in the pile. The only thing you have to watch out for it, do not get any cat litter that is colored or has color in it, as it will not look right, needless to say. You do not need to do this, but I found it made the final product look better.



Step Six (Part A): I went out doors and followed the directions of the spray can. I use a **brick red** color for the first coat. I shuffle the box and move the bricks around so I can hit as many sides as I can (but without getting them so sticky with paint the clump up.) I then let them dry.



Step Six (Part B): Now I repeat the last step but this time I use some **white** spray paint. (This simulates the white or grey colored mortar that hold bricks together.) When I spray these, I spray allot less than with the first step. I only want to hit some of the surfaces, not cover them (and make them all white!) I just shuffled my bricks around until I felt I had hit them enough. Set them aside and let them dry.

Step Six (Part C): Now I take a can of **Black** spray paint. This last spray is to hit *even less* of the bricks than I did before. (This black simulates the over baking of some bricks as well as to simulate that some bricks might have been in a burning building before the fell into a pile.) Spray the black sparingly and move the bricks around (keeps them loose and from sticking together, as you did in the other steps above.)



Step Six (Part D): The photo shows the bricks after I finished all the other steps and have now added the clay cat litter to the mix. I now shuffled the product around to mix it all in. I sprayed a little more of what ever color I felt was needed (if any.) This adds the look of broken bricks and mortar in the pile of rubble.

You will need to make sure the whole product is done drying. You do not want this pile of potential fumes in your home. Then you will want to find the pile of rubble a home. I use a large plastic Tupperware™ box, but any suitable re-close-able box or can will do. It does need to be strong

enough to hold this product as it can be heavy, and you don't want it to spill out when you store it or move it about. Otherwise, you'll have a big mess. As far as the product is concerned, you are now done.

Tips on using the Rubble: Lastly, I thought it might be helpful to give you a tip on how to use it. I first find the place we are going to play at. I lie a sheet (or tarp) down and then lay my game boards over it. I then set out all the terrain we will be using. Then before any troops or vehicles are placed, I pour and sprinkle this 'brick product' out in the areas that seem right (over and around ruined buildings is often the right place.) We are now ready to deploy and game! When we pick up I do the same steps, but now in reverse. Once the game table is empty of all minis and terrain I carefully lift the boards and spill out the 'bricks' on to the drop cloth/sheet under the boards. Then gather the ends up so the rubble is in a pile and then just scoop it all up and put it into the storage container. (Note: Game mats make their own 'sheet' so you only have to roll them up a bit and carefully pour the rubble into the storage container.)

Until Next time.....

The next article will be on adding wooden floor boards (painted/stained coffee stirrers) and other debris to the brick mix to add more 'realism' to the mix. I hope this was helpful and inspires you and adds to your gaming experience.

