

## How to Make a Latex Mask

As part of my graduate studies at UNC School of the Arts, I have to publicly publish part of my thesis. I chose to research mold making and casting for theatre, and one of the projects I did was create a latex mask. I came across an awesome reference image for the mask on the internet (unfortunately neglecting to note who created it... if you know who, please let me know!).

Here is a basic how-to of my process:

1. Sculpt your mask on a plaster positive, I choose to sculpt the head separate from the castle. I like using Monster Clay because it's easier to recycle at the end of a project and you don't have to keep it in a moist environment, but really any clay could be used.
2. With a completed sculpt, turn the head on its side, supporting it with some upholstery foam so as not to damage anything.
3. Build walls with water based clay around the sculpt, and added vertical walls to catch the plaster. (I used water based clay here so that I could easily clean the sculpt off later. It also made making perfectly angled walls easier. You can also use oil based clay. It's just a matter of preference.) You want the walls to be perfect right angles so everything lines up nicely later on.
4. When you finish the walls, mix up a batch of Ultracal 30, and pour a small bit over the sculpt, using a craft brush to apply a beauty coat. A



beauty coat helps to eliminate air bubbles. Pour more Ultracal, and wait for it to set up a bit, then build a nice even coat up over the whole piece.

5. Once the Ultracal completely hardens, turn everything over and remove all of the clay, taking care to repair the areas of the sculpt that got damaged in the process.
6. Add keys to the edges of the Ultracal using a chisel to chip away a 'V' shape every five inches or so, and then apply a generous amount of Vaseline® over the surface.
7. Build vertical walls to contain the next batch of Ultracal, using the same process as the first side. This time wait 24 hours for it to fully cure, since the process of cracking the mold could literally break the mold if you try to open the mold too soon.



8. After 24 hours, begin the arduous process of cracking the mold. I recommend having a helper hold the mold steady as you use a rubber mallet to wedge in popsicle sticks. I actually had to use a long, fine bladed knife to start a spot that was big enough to allow for the width of a popsicle stick. Don't use a chisel for this.



9. Once the mold is open, clean out all of the clay. Any residue from oil based clay can be cleaned out with Isopropyl Alcohol.

10. With a clean mold, fit the two halves together and use strap clamps to hold them together. Put the mold into a box with some sort of cushion: packing peanuts, upholstery foam, etc.

11. Apply casting latex with small pieces of upholstery foam, switch out the foam often, so that the latex you have applied doesn't get pulled away from the mold with the cured latex on the foam.
12. Use a hairdryer after each layer of latex is applied. Don't apply a fresh layer until the previous has cured, otherwise you will have a weak, mushy mask.
13. You want an even thickness of about an 1/8". I used Casting Latex from [theengineerguy.com](http://theengineerguy.com), and used about 15-20 layers. I have also used Clear Latex, which is much thinner, and have had to thicken it with Cabosil so that it wouldn't take forever.
14. When you have achieved the proper thickness, apply baby powder to the latex; this prevents the mask from sticking to itself.
15. Remove the strap clamps and carefully remove the mask.
16. Apply baby powder to the exterior of the mask.
17. You will have a thin line of latex where the seam of the mold was. Use a small, SHARP pair of scissors to trim this as close to the mask as possible.
18. Tada! You have a latex mask! Next, you'll want to paint it.
19. Mix a small amount of acrylic paint with Pros-Aide (a super strong prosthetic adhesive)- this mixture is called Pax- and use a piece of upholstery foam to stipple over the whole mask. You can use a hairdryer to speed up dry time in between layers. For more detailed areas, I recommend using alcohol activated makeup.
20. Seal your painted mask with baby powder. This will dull the colors a bit, but you can mist the mask with water to remove the excess powder. I have also used a clear acrylic spray to seal, but sometimes it will result in a cracked texture... which can be really cool if it's the look you're going for.





I cut out the eyes on my mask and used pieces of sunglass lens to cover the eye spaces as well as the third eye. I glued them on with CaboPatch- Cabosil mixed with Pros-Aide. I built the castle by sculpting a tower and two wall pieces, molding them with Ultracal and casting them in cold foam. I connected the cast pieces with latex and painted them using the same technique as the mask. I glued the castle and walls with Pros-Aide, the center piece I glued with CaboPatch. I cut up the back of the mask to

allow it to slip over a head, finishing the mask.

