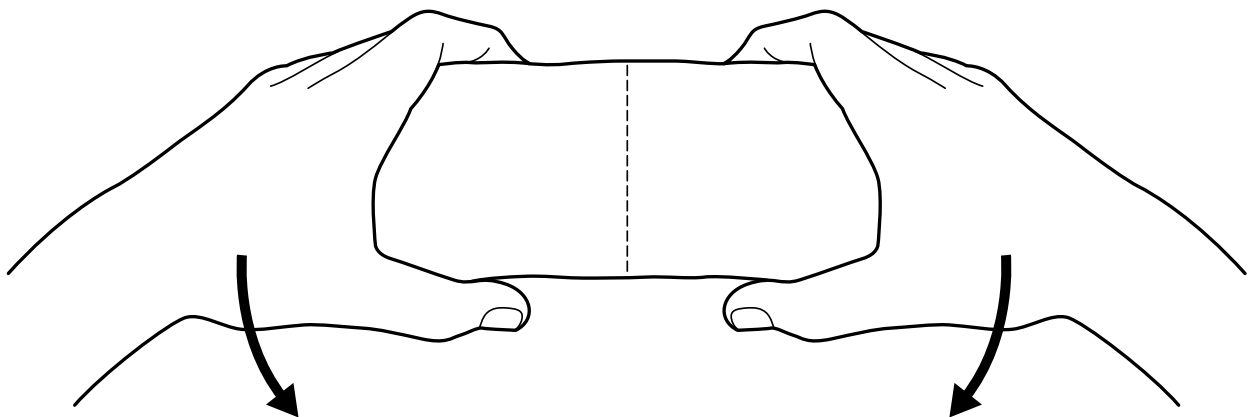


Make mud bricks

Make three mud bricks in the following way.

1. Put four heaped tablespoons of compost into a bowl.
2. Add water a little at a time and knead it into the compost until the compost sticks together in a lump. The surface of the lump should shine with water but water should not trickle out of it.
3. Shape the lump into a block about 10 cm long, 5 cm wide and 4 cm high.
4. Repeat step 1.
5. Take a pinch of straw from the bag (about twenty strands) and cut them to about 3–4 cm in length then add them to the compost in the bowl.
6. Repeat steps 2 and 3.
7. Repeat step 1.
8. Repeat step 5 but this time add two pinches of straw to the compost.
10. Repeat steps 2 and 3.
11. Set out all three bricks on a board and leave to dry.
12. Examine the bricks and compare their appearance and test their strength by gently trying to snap them as diagram 1 shows.



Make mud bricks

Age range

- Years 3/4 (SP4/5).
- Years 5/6 (SP6/7).

Resources

Copies of the worksheet. A bag of compost from a garden centre, a bag of dust free medicated straw from a pet shop (check that your school policies allow you to use this material), a bowl, a tablespoon, a board on which to put the bricks, a jug of water, a ruler. A place to leave the bricks to dry where they will be undisturbed.

Using the worksheet

Look at the picture on page 18 showing the village of Deir el-Medina. Ask the children why the top part of the houses, believed to have been made of mud bricks, have disappeared, while the lower walls of stone remain. Look for an answer about the mud bricks drying up and breaking up. Tell the students that they are going to make three kinds of mud brick and see how easily they break when they dry out. Issue the worksheet and go through it with the students before they begin.

A pinch of straw is made by inserting a finger and thumb into the bag of straw and pulling out about 20 strands. The ends of these strands are often quite long and should be cut off over a waste bin.

Younger students

You may wish to organise a team of teacher helpers for this activity. You may like to take the class through making each brick in turn.

Outcomes

The students can:

- With help, follow instructions.
- Use simple equipment and materials safely.
- Make observations from which comparisons can be drawn.

Older students

The students can work in pairs or on their own. The activity could be extended by cutting straw into smaller pieces before adding it to the compost.

Outcomes

The students can:

- Follow instructions.
- Use simple equipment and materials safely.
- Make observations from which comparisons can be drawn.