



<http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Lot/9373/SCREAM/lifecast.html>

## Life Casting 2

Here you will find three different sets of life casting directions. Two for face casting; one low budget and one that's a little more expensive, and directions for casting a full head project.

### Low Cost Face Casting by Rebecca Burt

If you haven't ever done a life cast before, the prospect is daunting. For many it's the first step towards doing more professional and complex work, and it looks tough. But, in all truth it really isn't. Making a life cast of another person (we don't suggest you try it on yourself) is actually quite easy, and doesn't take long either. We hope that this how-to will help you.

#### Materials

We've used fairly cheap materials and the cost for our life cast was about \$30, most of which is for alginate, but that can fluctuate depending on the quality and amount of materials that you buy.

- Petroleum jelly
- Bald cap (suggested, but not necessary)
- Alginate
- Plaster bandages
- Plaster
- A paint brush (can be a cheap one)

## Before You Start

Make certain that your subject is not claustrophobic! They should feel at ease with their face covered, and should trust you so they aren't scared. You also have to be careful not to make your subject move their face (laugh or frown) while the alginate is setting, if their face moves it will screw up your cast and the positive will come out distorted.

## Making the Negative

1. Have your subject clean their face well, and tied back their hair if it's long. Dampening their hair around the face and using a little hair spray or gel will help keep their hair out of the alginate.
2. If you have a bald cap put it on your subject, the alginate won't damage it and it will keep the alginate from sticking to the hairs around your subject's face (it isn't very fun to pick out afterwards). Smear a little petroleum jelly on any of your subject's face hair (eyebrows, lashes, mustache, etc.) you don't need to glob it on, just use enough to kind of grease the hair.
3. Cut the plaster bandages to lengths approximately 2 or 3 times the width, and then the length, of your subject's face and fold them in half or thirds so that they're the right length. Make sure to have a few extra pieces cut and have a few pieces that are only an inch or two to use around the nostrils. With the bandage it's better to over calculate than skimp and end up with a distorted casting.
4. If you feel you need to (or the subject wants it) use pieces of drinking straw in their nose to make sure that you don't block off their breathing. Usually if you're careful you won't need to use straws, but it's always a good precaution, especially for beginners.
5. Mix up your alginate (however the instructions say), you'll probably need 2 to 4 cups depending on the size of your subject's face. The alginate should be about the thickness of tomato paste or runny mashed potatoes, so that when you put some on your subject's face it will glob down slowly with most of it sticking. Using cool water will give you a little more time to work before the alginate starts setting up. Don't worry about the alginate sticking to the bowl or the counter, it'll peel off easily when you're done.
6. Start at the forehead, glopping the alginate on your subject's face. Kind of pat it on, don't wipe at it too much or you'll get thin spots. Be careful to get alginate into the corners of the eyes and mouth so that you don't get air bubbles on your final product. Work it over the entire face, almost to the ears and down the neck a little ways, making sure that you get a pretty thick coat. Check the nose to make sure the alginate is thick enough, it's easy to leave it too thin there and that will cause the nose area to distort or break. When you've done the face put any extra on spots that might be thin (like the forehead, cheeks and nose). If you get a little alginate over your subject's nostril just have them blow it out before it's set.

7. Lean back for awhile and let the alginate set, it doesn't take very long. You know it's set when it is solid and rubbery without being sticky. Now you can start with the plaster bandages.
8. Wet your plaster bandages, again the temperature of the water will change your setting time (colder = slower, warmer = faster). Just dip it in and then bring it out and rub the layers together slightly to saturate it well. Leaving it in the water too long will wash away the plaster. Squeeze the bandage out a little so it isn't sopping wet (but don't wring it dry), and start layering them over the alginate. Make sure that you cover the entire face well with plenty of bandage so that the negative won't bend out of shape too much when you remove it. Be careful around the nose and use one of your thin strips between the nostrils for strength there.
  9. Wait for the plaster bandages to set. It will take longer than the alginate but probably no more than 15 min. or so. You could use some of this time to clean up a little of the mess you're making before your subject can see it ; )
10. When the plaster bandages are dry, have your subject lean forward slightly and wiggle their face while you hold the outside. You may have to help them by loosening it off around the edges. It should come off really easily and you'll have your negative done.
11. Now that you have the negative you need to make a positive. Alginate dries out fairly quickly and starts to shrink when it does so you should make the positive as soon as you can.

### Making The Positive

1. Take the negative and set it so that it sits flat. Sometimes a box of sand works well to hold it level and still, but just about anything will work, just be careful not to bend or stretch the negative too much.
2. Mix up your plaster. One way to judge how much you'll need is to carefully fill the negative just about full of water and then pour that into your mixing bowl (before you set it up level) then just mix it to the right thickness.
3. Use the paint brush to spread a layer of plaster in the negative. Just kind of glop with it, don't brush at it too much or you will make air bubbles. Be careful to get into all of the crevasses. This will make air bubbles on the outside layer of your positive less likely. Get down close and blow on the surface of the plaster to get rid of any bubbles that may there.
4. Let that layer set up a little, but not for so long that the rest of the stuff you mixed up starts to thicken up and harden. Carefully pour the rest of the plaster into the negative, pouring as close to the surface as you can to eliminate the chances of air bubbles. Blowing on the surface will get rid of most that appear there.
5. Let the plaster set, long enough so that there's no doubt that the inside areas are hard enough that they won't break when you remove the negative.
6. Carefully work off the negative. Usually you can peel it off well enough that you could make another positive if you wanted to.

7. Voila! You've just finished making a life cast of your subject's face! I suggest leaving it alone over night so that the plaster can fully dry and harden before using it for anything. If you want it to stay fairly clean through whatever you use it for, try spraying it with a coat of clear acrylic spray, then you'll be able to wipe off most of any mess you make.

## Facial Life Cast #2



Here is a second life casting project featuring a face-only cast that takes a little higher budget.

Plastic to protect the subjects clothing  
Comb, hair spray and/or gel spray bottle of water  
Bald cap or plastic wrap  
Scissors  
Spirit gum or other adhesive such as latex or pros aide  
Felt pen  
Petroleum jelly  
Large rubber bowl containing premeasured alginate  
Spatula  
Pitcher of premeasured water  
Extra pitcher of water just in case  
Five or Six pieces of burlap  
Two rolls of 4-inch plaster bandage cut into four strips each of 8, 10, and 12 inches and several small pieces for nose  
Bucket of warm water with a pinch of salt in it for plaster bandages  
Extra 1/4 cup of alginate to fill the nostrils on the life mask  
Krazy Glue  
Extra brushes. spatulas, and towels

For making the positive:

Makeshift cradle in which to rest the negative (a pan with rags in it will work you just need something to hold the negative up so the tip of the nose will not have pressure on it and cause deformities)  
brushes for applying the first two layers of plaster  
Small and large rubber bowls for plaster  
Plaster  
Wooden handle or aluminum rod, 7 inches long and 1 inch (25 mm) in diameter  
Two strips of burlap for the ends of the handle  
Metal spatula to smooth out the plaster

Surgical knife, plaster rasp; or surform tool to trim the mold

Explain the entire procedure you are about to do to the subject. Make sure they understand that they must breathe through their nose only for the entire process. Also that they must not move their facial muscles a calm relaxed face must be kept. Give the subject a notebook so they can ask any questions if needed during the process. Make sure your subject knows that when you are working around their nose that if alginate covers their nose. Not to panic simply force air out their nose and the alginate will be removed.

Cover subject's clothing with plastic. Use water and hairspray/gel if needed to flatten the subject's hair. If ears are needed in the cast. Cut holes for ears in the bald cap. If ears are not needed glue the bald cap over top of them. It will make removal easier later. Glue the bald cap down with spirit gum make sure there are no wrinkles in the cap. Use a felt tip pen to mark where the hairline is. Use petroleum jelly to lightly coat bald cap and any hair on the face such as eyebrows, eyelashes.

Make sure your subject is seated as comfortably as possible. Have your subject close their eyes and relax their face breathing only out their nose. Begin to mix premeasured alginate and water. The consistency should be that of a thick crème. Work quickly alginate sets up fast. Starting at the top of the forehead apply alginate in a downward scooping motion. When you get to the eye area beware of air pockets. Make sure alginate covers entire surface of skin by following the shape of the face with your hands. Now begin to put alginate around the nose.

Work carefully so you do not block the air way of your subject. Remind your subject again that if alginate clogs their breathing to blow air out forcefully through their nose.

When face and neck if needed is completely covered in alginate. Quickly before alginate dries press burlap into it. Or if it has dried smear denture adhesive onto the alginate then apply bandages over it. This will help the bandages and the alginate to stick together when removing it from the face. Begin adding bandages. Soak plaster bandages in water for around 5 seconds. Then squeeze out majority of the water. Apply bandages longest pieces being for the sides of the face medium pieces for the forehead etc. Use small pieces of plaster bandage over the nose. Take a tiny piece of bandage and apply between nostrils. Be sure to press the bandages to the shape of the alginate. In completion there should be 4 layers of bandages. Now you must wait for the bandages to dry.

After the bandages are dried you can now begin removal. Have your subject wiggle his facial muscles to loosen the alginate from their skin. Beginning at the top careful loosen the alginate. It should pop off easily. If it doesn't just carefully work with it and have your subject wiggle his face around more and it will come off.

You need to begin the positive soon. As the negative sets the alginate starts to dry out

and will begin to shrink. You may wish to lay wet paper towels in the negative to prevent shrinkage.

### Making The Positive

Lay the negative in the cradle. Mix a small amount of plaster. Tap the container that mixed plaster is in or bounce it to release air bubbles. If there are wet paper towels in the negative remove them and use a dry paper towel to remove any water.

Using a soft brush paint a coat of plaster onto the inside of the negative. Get as close to the negative as possible and blow on the plaster. This will help prevent air bubbles. Let first coat start to dry. Before it is completely dry add another coat. Blow on plaster to release air bubbles. Do several coats this way.

Mix large amount of plaster. Take wooden handle and wrap plaster soaked pieces of burlap around each end. Place in the mold. Pour plaster around it and under it. Allow a space under the handle big enough that your fingers can wrap around it. Smooth out plaster and let dry. Monitor the plaster as it dries. The plaster will become hot then cool down. After the plaster starts to cool and before it is cold. Separate the positive and the negative. Use a surgical knife to remove any lumps or excess plaster.

## Full Head Life Casting

You will need:

super glue  
celastic  
acetone  
extra water, alginate and bandages

Apply bald cap and then apply petroleum jelly to bald cap and hair as in the life casting instructions. Put cotton in the subjects ears. Use modeling wax behind ears to help reduce undercuts. Apply petroleum jelly to ears inside and out. Apply alginate to entire head. Make alginate particularly thick over the ears and taper it off on the sides.

When alginate is set. Apply plaster bandages to the front of the head. Make a straight line over the head and curve around the ears. The bandages at the center line must be at least 1/2 inch thick and very smooth like a wall. Put petroleum jelly on the plaster bandages edge. Apply plaster bandages to back of head meeting the front bandages everywhere except the ears. Curve around the ears again. No bandages should be over the ear area.

Before separating bandages make a mark on each side of the head. This will be used later to help line it back up properly. When bandages are dry carefully remove the back half. Using scissors very carefully split the alginate up the back. Now you can gently remove the entire life cast. The ears will be a bit tough to get loose. But with a little work will come loose. Do not remove the front bandages.

Mix a small amount of alginate and fill nostril holes. careful not to deform the nose with too much alginate. Glue the alginate you cut back together with super glue. Place back plaster bandage shell on making sure the lines you made earlier line up. Soak celastic in acetone. Cover ear area with celastic. Take a strip of celastic and cover seams. Then wrap celastic around the forehead and chin area. Mix plaster and pour into negative. Slop it around to coat entire inside. Pour more plaster in. When dry cut celastic straps separate the halves and remove the alginate

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