



http://www.fulcrumsites.com/haunt/html/foam_tombstones.html

Building Tombstones from Pink Foam

By Kevin T. Kennedy

Tombstone making is a must-have skill for any home haunter. Store-bought stones are not only expensive, they are usually small or limited in their designs.

I've been making my own tombstones for the past few years; I have about 50 homemade little gems in my arsenal. Each one consists of little more than a few foam blocks, some cheap Halloween decorations and a bit of paint.

I've gotten many emails from people about how I make them so I thought I would write down my technique in this easy-to-follow tutorial:

Here's what you'll need:

Tools:

- Hacksaw blade or foam cutter
- Dremel tool with router attachment
- Engraving bit
- Paint brushes; one large, one small
- Paint roller and tray
- Squirt bottle

Materials:

- 2" pink foam insulation
- Latex paint; one dark, one light grey
- Spray paint; black
- Repositionable adhesive (SprayMount)



Step One: Sketch

You may decide to sketch your idea out on paper, this will help you to visualize the overall concept of your stone as well as any required materials.

Step Two: Cut and shape the blank

A blank is a tombstone shape with nothing on it. Use a hacksaw blade or foam cutter to make rough cuts and a sanding block to shape and smooth the edges of the foam to the desired form. See Figure 1.



Figure 1

Cut and shape the blank with a hacksaw and foam sanding block.

Step Three: Lettering

Paint your tombstone with a light coat of latex paint; this will prevent the adhesive from eating into the foam, Figure 2. Design and print the lettering on your computer. I also printed some bat wings to adorn this stone. See Figure 3.



Figure 2

Paint the stone with a light coat of latex paint, if not, the spray adhesive will eat into the foam.



Figure 3

Print the lettering.

Trim off most of the excess paper from your letters and apply a light but even coat of adhesive to the back of the sheet. Carefully apply the sheet where desired and working from the inside out, smooth any bubbles or imperfections, see figure 4.

Note: if you've never used a Dremel with router attachment, you may want to practice this next step on a piece of scrap foam.



Figure 4

Trim the sheet, apply a thin coat of spray adhesive and fix the lettering to your stone.

Set your router attachment to $\frac{1}{4}$ " deep, dial it up to 7 or 8 and carefully trace the edges of the letters, the engraving bit will carve a thin channel into the foam. Starting with the closed letters such as "o", "p" and "a", trace the inside of the letter going in a counter-clockwise motion. See Figure 5. Then trace the letters along the outer edge in a clockwise motion (Figure 8), this will keep the bit from chewing up the foam and creating a ragged appearance to your engraving.



Figure 5

Carefully trace the insides of the closed letters in a counter clockwise motion.



Figure 6

When done tracing, the letter should look like this.

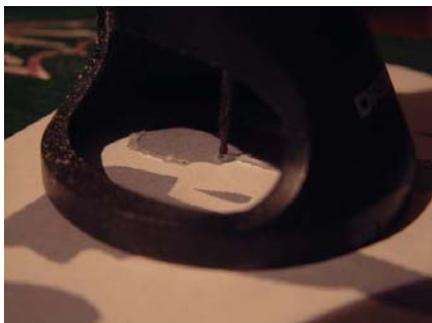


Figure 7

Trace the outside edge of the letter in a clockwise motion.



Figure 8

When done tracing, the letter should look like this.

Once the letters have been traced with the Dremel, remove the paper carefully to avoid peeling off any foam, a small amount of water will also help to remove the adhesive. See figure 9. Finish removing the foam on the inside area of the letters with the bit (figure 10).



Figure 9

Peel the paper off carefully, a bit of water will help loosen the adhesive.



Figure 10

Finish cutting out the letters with the engraving bit.

Step Four: Finishing and weathering

Create any cracks, scratches or worn spots on your stone and give these as well as the engraved letters a quick coat of latex paint, see figure 11. When dry, carefully roll a light coat of grey over the high spots to achieve a contrasting effect between light and dark. See figure 12. Paint and attach any ornamentation before weathering. See figure 13.



Figure 11

Coat the lettering with some latex paint and then spray them with black before rolling on a small amount of grey topcoat.



Figure 12

After topcoat, the stone should look something like this.



Figure 13

Paint and add the ornament before the final weathering.

There are many different techniques to weathering, my favorite is to wet the stone with the spray bottle, apply a few short bursts of black spray, wait a few moments, then spray with water again. I repeat this last step several times with light coats until the desired effect is achieved.

I guess that does it, place the new stone in your graveyard and enjoy! The foam material is a great medium for tombstone making; it's cheap, light and easily carved. Experiment with some scraps to make larger and more ornate designs. Go on a cemetery hike and take pictures of some stones you'd like to make. Your guests and family will enjoy these homemade originals for many years to come and you'll find that your homemade stones get many more compliments than the store-bought variety just on originality.



Figure 14

Place your new stone in your graveyard and enjoy! All of the stones pictured here came from a single sheet.