

Intro to Foamsmithing!

Required Materials

- Thick foam (4mm or similar)
- Thin foam (2mm or craft foam)
- Scissors
- Box cutter, utility knife, or craft knife
- Hot glue, super glue, or contact cement
- Paint brushes and acrylic paint
- Heat gun, hair dryer, or stovetop
- Googly eyes

Optional Materials

- Plastidip, mod podge, or wood glue
- Wood burner or rotary tool
- Spray paint and topcoat/sealer
- Other decorative bits and bobs

Creating the pattern and transferring to foam

1. If you're starting with a pattern, modify it until you're happy with the paper version.
2. Transfer the pattern to foam using a pen.
 - o Base pieces should be in thicker/4mm or 6mm foam.
 - o Details will be in 2mm/craft foam.
3. Cut out the pieces!
 - o For best results, use a box cutter or craft knife on the thicker foam. Unless you're trying to make a beveled cut, be sure to keep your blade straight (perpendicular to your cutting surface).
 - o I use a box cutter on my craft foam as well, but you may prefer to use scissors.
4. Texture time!
 - o For wood grain, feathers, battle damage, and leaves, lightly score your detail lines with your box cutter. Use the heat gun to lightly melt the foam, which will make your details much more prominent.
 - o For leather texture, first heat your foam with the heat gun. As it cools, press balled up foil over the surface.
 - o *Advanced Tip:* Rotary tools and wood burners work great for texturing and detailing foam! Just be sure to protect your eyes and lungs.

Assembly and heat shaping

5. Use hot glue or super glue to attach (or, in the case of any vines, create) your raised details, including straps and handles.
 - *Advanced Tip:* If it weren't wildly toxic, we would be using contact cement instead of super or hot glue. If you intend to pursue foamsmithing, buy a respirator and some contact cement ASAP!
6. Use your box cutter to finish your details - now is the time to add battle damage!
 - Like your wood grain, leaf, and feather details, you can add scratches and marks and then lightly melt the foam to make them pop.
7. Using the heat gun, carefully heat every surface of your piece to seal the surface of the foam and prepare it for painting. When the foam takes on a shimmery finish, it's done!
 - A stove top or blow dryer can do the trick if you don't own a heat gun.
 - *Advanced Tip:* Given more drying time we would also be adding a barrier seal to our pieces. I prefer Plastidip, but mod podge and wood glue work well too.
8. Using the heat gun, evenly heat the portions of your piece that you want to be rounded. Bend the section to your desired shape, then hold it in place while it cools.

Final details and painting

9. Attach your GOOGLY EYE RIVETS!
10. Paint the base colors of your piece. For wood and pleather, start with your darkest shade and gradually work up to higher layers so that the details remain dark.
11. If you lighten your crevices too much, water down black or dark brown paints and brush it into the deepest parts of your piece. Let it sit for a few seconds and then wipe off most of the paint with a towel. Paint will remain in the nooks and crannies, creating a grimy effect.
12. To add weathering and highlights in the highest parts of your piece, pick up a small amount of white, silver, or light brown on a dry, beat up paintbrush. Dab most of the paint off on a towel, and then gently pull the brush across the highest parts of your piece. This will create a scratched, weathered effect.
13. Once you're happy with your paint job, you're done and ready to charge into battle!
 - *Advanced Tip:* Foam paint jobs can be sealed just like any other acrylic pieces. I usually use Rust-oleum's Clear Durable Topcoat because it enhances metallic paints, but mod podge and other sealers work great too.