



<http://www.halloween-online.com/sfx/halloween-projects-making-tombstones.html>

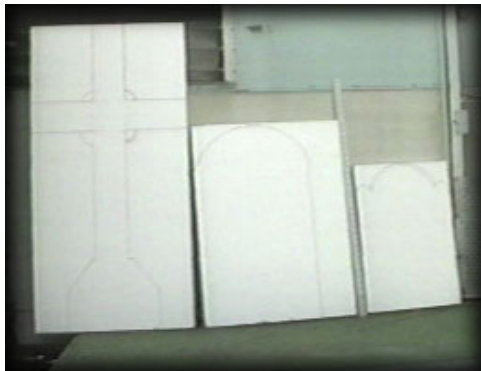
## TOMBSTONE FACTORY

You can make your own realistic looking tombstones by using simple tools and materials. Our tombstones are made from sheets of foam insulation available from most hardware stores for about \$10.00 per 8'x4'x2" sheet.



The basic tools and materials needed to construct these simple tombstones include:

- Sheets of Foam Insulation
- Jig-saw with 3-1/2" blade
- Marker, Charcoal Pencil, Yard stick
- Latex paint & black tint
- Paint brush & 4" paint roller
- Whisk broom (hand held) and large metal hooks
- High Speed Rotary Tool



First you will need to carefully draw out the shape of the particular tombstone style you want onto a sheet of foam using a yard stick and a black felt-tip marker.

Remember, your graveyard will look best with tombstones of varying designs and sizes, and you can easily make a dozen tombstones in just a few hours (paint drying time not included).

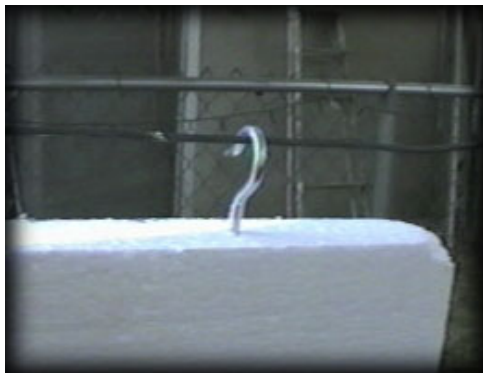
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Now that you have the designs drawn onto the surface of the foam, use the jig-saw, equipped with a 3-1/2" long blade (Blu-Mol #6402) to carefully cut along the markings you've made, cutting out the shape for the tombstone.

To make thicker tombstones, simply glue additional layers of foam cut-outs together until you get the desired thickness.

Always wear appropriate safety equipment, including safety goggles when working with power tools.



Before priming, screw two large hooks into the bottom of the tombstone so that it can be hung upside-down on a clothesline or cord.

For the primer we bought a gallon of flat white latex paint (\$6.00), added Lamp Black Tint (\$3.00). We added the tint and mixed thoroughly until it was a medium shade of gray. It's important to use only water-based paint or it will melt the foam.



While you can use a standard brush to apply the initial paint, using a 4" or 6" paint roller and roller pan really speeds up the process.

Apply the paint liberally over all surfaces of the tombstone. Now use a standard brush to go over it to smooth out and remove any dripping paint.

Make sure to fill any dents or nicks in the foam. If you have carved in an epitaph and/or designs, be sure to fill them well, removing any excess that might run.



Let the paint dry over night , then apply a second coat of primer paint, making sure to seal the foam well. Let the tombstone dry for another day.

Once the primer coats have dried thoroughly, you now have a basic tombstone. At this point you must decide how you are going to letter and decorate the face of the tombstones.

### *EPITAPHS & DESIGNS*

#### ***"What do you want on your Tombstone?"***

Imprinting the epitaphs and decorative designs onto your tombstones can be accomplished several ways.

Method #1 - The simplest way is to use standard craft acrylic paint and brushes to paint on an epitaph and any other designs you want onto the face of the painted tombstone. Stencils can make this easier, but the lettering will be flat on the surface of the tombstone.

Method #2 - After the tombstone has been primed and has dried completely, you can write your epitaph with a slightly darker colored marker or pencil. Now use an Xacto knife to carve out the letters in a "V" shape. Finally, to make the epitaphs more readable, we use acrylic craft paint to shade the inside of the letters. Black is too dark and the color of the primer is too light, so mix a color in-between.

Method #3 - For the most realistic look you can carve the epitaph and any decorative patterns into the foam with a high speed rotary tool (Dremel). Carving the letters into the surface of the tombstone looks very realistic, but does require more time and a few extra tools.

Several different attachments are used including the wheel grinder, router and small cutting wheel. This can be done freehand or by printing out the epitaphs on paper, then attaching the paper to the face of the tombstone. You then use the rotary tool to carve right through the paper into the foam.

Care must be taken or the spinning tool will dig too deep into the foam or go off the lines of the design. Finally, to make the epitaphs more readable, we use acrylic craft paint to shade the inside of the letters. Black is too dark and the color of the primer is too light, so mix a color in-between.

### **Always wear safety equipment, including safety goggles when working with power tools**

Method #4 - You can also use a soldering or wood-burning iron to burn-in the words and designs. But you must do this before priming the foam.

### ***DISTRESSING AND FINAL PAINTING***

While the gray primer has brought the foam closer to looking like a tombstone, it still does not look like stone. Since we like our tombstones to look as realistic as possible, we apply a special finishing paint to give it a stone like look.

"Style Stone" spray kits are available from craft and hardware stores, and produce very nice speckle patterns similar to those of granite. While this can be a bit expensive to use, the effect is worth it. And you can use these year after year.

Don't try to hold down the spray button for long periods of time to paint the tombstone. Instead, use short, controlled bursts. This way if you over paint an area you can easily fix it by blending around it.

Also, if you will be using the tombstones outdoors for an extended period of time or during bad weather, you will want to weather-proof the tombstones by adding a final coat of clear, non-gloss sealant.



***Black Light Hair Spray*** from ***Fun World*** sprayed evenly over the front surface of the tombstone shows up very spooky under the black light. We found that spraying the tombstone in the dark with the black light on works the best.

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One can of the Black Light Hair Spray can usually paint between 3 and 5 tombstones depending on their size. This product can be found just about everywhere during the Halloween season.

## ***SECURING THE TOMBSTONES***

We have used several different methods to secure our tombstones to the ground that work very well.

Method #1 - First carefully drill a 3/8" hole into the bottom of the tombstone a couple of inches from each end. Now take two 16" pieces of 3/8" dowel (sharpened at both ends) and carefully drive one end half way up into the bottom of the Tombstone.

Lightly set the tombstone with it's spikes onto the ground to make an impression of where the spike holes will go. Using an extra sharpened dowel, drive it eight inches into the ground where your spike markings are, and remove. You can now push the tombstone spikes into the holes.

Method #2 - At most hardware stores you can buy large spikes (they look like giant nails). Measure and cut a piece of 1/2"x6" board so that it is four inches longer than the width of the tombstone. Drill a centered hole four to six inches from each end one bit size smaller than the diameter of the spike.

Hammer the two spikes through the holes. Set the bottom of the tombstone over the top of the spikes just hard enough to make indentations for drilling. Drill the two spike holes into the tombstone. Apply white glue (Elmers) to the spikes and inside of the spike holes, and push the spikes into the tombstone holes all the way. To setup, dig a trench the same size as the wooden based and it into it. Cover the base with dirt just above the edge of the tombstone.

We like our cemetery to look old and foreboding. We use many different styles of tombstones, painted in different stone colors, and place them unevenly throughout our yard haunt. Some are crooked or misaligned. As final touches, you can lightly dust them, add mud, glue on fake moss, leaves, spray with cob-webs, etc. If you have a supply of dirt, you can build up 3" to 6" high mounds in front of each Tombstone to give that "just buried" effect.

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