

# How to Make a Greek Theater Mask



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Greek comedy and tragedy masks, which have come to represent theater itself, are excellent examples of Greek theatre masks. A Greek theater mask should evoke a dramatic emotional response--looking at the masks, you should be instantly aware which emotion they represent. If you decide to make a Greek mask, you can create this type of emotion by sculpting facial expressions and unique characteristics into the mask.

### **Things You'll Need:**

- Water
- Balloon
- 600-Grain Sandpaper
- 2-Inch Strips Of Newspaper
- Flour
- Paint

# Making a Greek Theatre Mask Using Papier Mache on a Form



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Sketch out what you want the mask to look like. Decide whether you want it to go around the whole head or just on your face.



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Blow up a balloon to use as a form. Be sure it is big enough to cover your head or face depending on which mask type you chose. Draw where any openings will be--mouth and eyes, for example--and if it is a full mask, draw an opening big enough to fit your head.



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Add cotton or crumpled-up newspaper covered with masking tape to make wrinkles, lips, eyebrows and facial expressions. Use pieces of cardboard covered with newspaper and tape for bigger structures such as hair.



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Rip strips of newspaper 6 inches long and 1 inch wide.



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Mix together flour and water to make paste. Start with about two cups of each. The paste should be thinner than pancake batter but thick enough to cling to the newspaper strips.



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Dip a newspaper strip into the paste mixture. Use fingers like a squeegee to wipe off excess. Place the strip on the balloon and smooth out any wrinkles or air bubbles. Repeat in criss-cross pattern, at odd angles and slightly overlapping, until front (and back if you are doing a full mask) of balloon and all the sculptural elements are covered, leaving holes left where you drew mouth, eye and, if applicable, neck holes.





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Let it dry completely. Then add more strips in another layer. Repeat for a third layer. All the layers add strength to the mask.

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Let the mask dry completely in the sun. Sand out any unwanted wrinkles or blemishes. Then, pop the balloon and remove.



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Paint the mask according to your sketch. You may want to use more than one coat, sanding between coats, to get the best coverage. Let dry.



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Add a final clear coat or spray with weatherproofing clear sealant.

## Tip

Remember--Greek masks are supposed to convey emotion, so exaggerate the sculptural elements to make them more dramatic.

Use your own face as a model. Make the expression you want on your mask, and look in a mirror or feel the muscle shapes on your face so that you can duplicate the expression on a mask.

### **Warnings:**

- Be sure to let each papier mache layer dry completely before beginning the next, or your mask may get moldy.