

Make your own salt dough Lewis Chessmen!

We know that the Lewis Chessmen were made at least 800 years ago and were buried on the Isle of Lewis in Scotland. Why they were buried, and how they were found remain a mystery. One story of their discovery tells how the man who found them ran away because he thought they were magical little elves!

Chess was first played in India about 1500 years ago and this version included elephants! It was so popular that people began to play chess in Europe. By the time the Lewis Chessmen were made, the pieces had changed to kings, queens, bishops, knights, warders (soldiers), and pawns.

Most of the Lewis Chessmen were carved from walrus tusks and whale teeth. We know that they were originally painted red and black because experts have found traces of paint on the pieces.

Follow the instructions to learn how to make you very own Lewis chess pieces from salt dough!



You will need:

- ❑ One cup of plain flour (a little more for dusting!)
- ❑ Half a cup of salt
- ❑ Half a cup of cold water

Fun fact! Are you a Harry Potter fan? In the first film, Harry plays Wizard Chess using a set copied from the Lewis Chessmen! You can find out more from curator Irving Finkel [here!](#)

Instructions (go to the next page to see the final result and shape ideas!)

Mix all your ingredients together in a bowl until you can make a ball. If your dough ball doesn't hold its shape, add a little more flour. Flour a clean work surface and add your dough ball.



Make the body of your piece (save half the dough for the details). It should look like a doughy ghost! A body, head and long wobbly arms. You can then add whichever detail you like. We're making a **berserker!**



Make a shape that looks like the top of a mushroom for your helmet. **Tip - if you add a little water onto the surface you want to stick, it will make it sticky**



Now for the shield! Make a flat shield shape big enough to cover most of the body and protect your warrior! You can use a cocktail stick or butter knife to draw in your own detail. Then stick it on! (with the water glue)



To make the face - stick a piece of dough that looks like a duck's bill over the shield.

Now add the teeth - roll a small sausage of dough then use a cocktail stick or butter knife to carve the teeth (one line for each tooth should do it). Add this under the 'beak'.

Then make another sausage for the nose. Poke some holes for extra detail if you like. (Although the Iron Age was a smelly time so you might want to leave these off!)



The scary eyes come next! Roll two small balls and stick them on. If you have a cocktail stick you can add a pupil to scare your enemies even more.

You can push one arm behind the shield now. Depending on whether you are left or right handed, put the other arm across the shield to hold your sword.

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For the sword- make two more sausages- one larger than the other. Flatten the larger one and make it pointy. Stick this on so it touches the hand. Now put the small sausage over the top to make the hilt. You can decorate this too

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Now you've finished sculpting, you need to bake your chess piece to make it rock hard.

Put your finished item on a baking sheet and bake in the oven (on its lowest setting) for 3 hours or until solid. Make sure you wait until it's cool before you use him!



Here are a few examples from the chess set to inspire you!

The bishop wears a special hat called a mitre and has a staff called a crozier



A knight riding a horse

The warder (a soldier) or berserker is the one biting his shield. The legend goes that before battle, warriors would work themselves up in a frenzy and bite their shields.

This is where we get the word Berserk from!

The king is the most powerful and wise character. He carries a sword

The queen looking thoughtful (or is she bored?)