Welcome To My Bases Tutorial Page.

Please read this fully first, as this is my best way of explaining how I make my figure bases. Also, it contains some different methods I have used, depending on my figure's pose.

Another PDF I made for making bases is my German Paratrooper one.

This is my page, on how I make my bases for my 1/6th scale figures. I have been meaning to make this page for ages, but never seemed to get around to it. And after being asked how I make them, I have finally got around to making this. The wooden bases that I use are from this company, http://www.dalescraft.com/uk2shop-18.htm. The base I am using for this figure is the 6" round plaque (PL6R - £1.75) as shown on that page. This is an excellent size of base for a single figure, as it gives me enough room to add the landscape details to the base, without it taking up too much room on my shelf. Note: What you have to remember with using this company for the bases, is that they charge a flat £7.50 postage, for either a single base or a multiple order. So it makes more sense to make a large order for them, or combine the order with fellow modellers. Plus the prices for the bases are reduced, with the more you order. They will also make bases up to your needs, but it is best to e-mail the company first, to see if they can make them up for you.



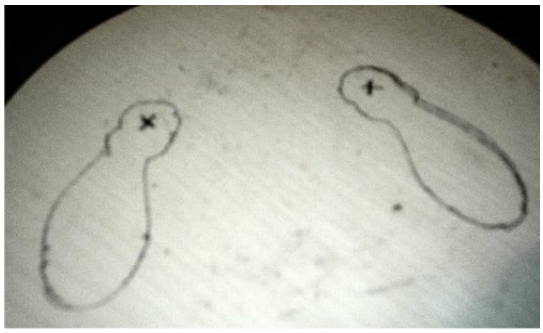
In the picture above left, is the basic 6" base as it is supplied from Dalescraft, and for comparison I have placed a figure on the plaque in the next picture. This shows how a figure fits onto the base and the space around the feet for the landscape. For my 2 figure base that I want to make with my US paratrooper .30 cal crew, the larger 10" square base will be needed.

Priming the base



One of the problems with using wooden bases for 1/6th scale landscapes, is that if they are used without priming it. The base will warp and not lay flat on your shelf. So, to seal the base against water from the Polyfilla mix (Plaster of Paris). I use neat PVA glue, as shown above. This is done as shown in the pictures above, firstly with just placing some PVA onto the base, then use a brush to spread it around to cover the base top. The final picture above right, shows the base with the PVA drying out. Even though I do not make the landscape right up to the base edge, I still paint the PVA glue on the edge. This way the water cannot 'creep' under and penetrate the wood. Also, with priming the base in this way, it makes a rough surface for the next step, and it allows the Polyfilla mix (Plaster of Paris) mix to stick better to the base. Note: I leave this to dry overnight, as depending on the size of the base, you may have to give it 2 coats of the PVA glue to make sure it is sealed.

Setting the figures pose

This is an important stage in the making of a diorama base, as you have to make sure you have room for the feet of the figure. I do this by placing the figure onto the bare base, then drawing around the boots. ***Note:*** *When I add the plaster 'mix' to the base, I add very little of it inside of the marks, so that the figure will stand level.*

Fixing the figures to the base - Part One



The best method I have found for making sure that I have a secure model on the base, is by using screws through the base into the feet. This makes sure that the figure cannot move and it sets the pose for me. The first thing I check is the length of the screws that I want to use, by seeing how they measure up against the base (picture left). I then drill a small hole in the base from above for each of the heels, which I countersink on the underneath of the base (so the screw head doesn't stick out, picture centre above). I then run them trough the base, to see how far they protrude, to check that they do not go too far into the figures leg. The next step I do for this is paint around and into the hole with neat PVA glue, to seal it against the water and the plaster 'mix'.

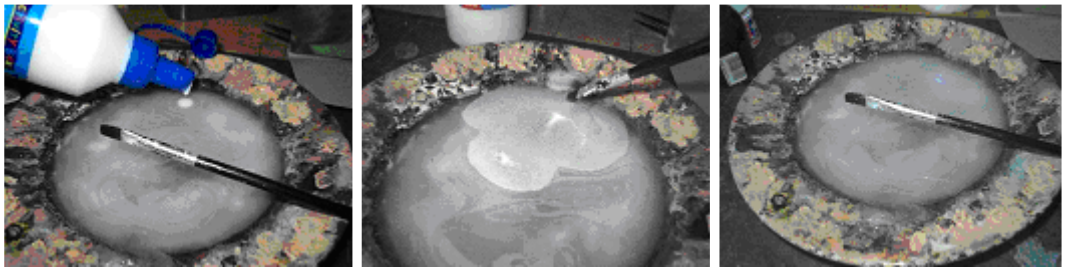
Note: If you make up a running pose similar to my Sepp figure, then you have to use four screws though the base into the feet. I used two of them in the heels, and two shorter one's into the soles of the boots. **Special Note: If you do use screws through the base into the soles, make sure that they go through the base into the flat of the foot only**. If the screw head comes out the top of the boot, it is obvious you have gone too far.... This is why I press down on the toes/laces of the boot, as this tells me that the screw is going to far, when I can feel the point in my finger and before it damages the top of the boot.

Note: The next three stages are done with the groundwork wet or semi hardening.

Making the landscape

Note: Firstly, place some newspaper under the base, as this saves the surface you are working on from being damaged, and in the later stages of this tutorial, you will be able to reuse some of the landscape materials. This is just a case of adding the plaster 'mix' onto the base; I do this in small patches at first, as I prefer to add too little rather than too much. I then just spread it around on the base to make the basic shape for the landscape. I always make sure that I do not go right up to the edge of the base with it, as I like the look of the irregular shape of the diorama, rather than having a completely round one.

Mixing PVA glue and water for use in sculpting the landscape



The three images above show how I have prepared the glue and water mix, in the left picture below I have a saucer of water and I am adding the PVA glue to it. The second picture shows how the glue dilutes down in the water, and after adding a little bit more the picture below right shows the mix ready to use. (**Note:** Make sure you use a saucer that the wife will not miss) Make this mix slightly thicker than shown for sculpting the base, as it helps to bond the plaster 'mix' together. **Note:** Because of the amount of water being used, a good primer on the base is essential to stop any warping of the base.

Sculpting the landscape

Note: Make sure you have a cloth ready to clean your fingers and brushes during these stages.
This is done after the plaster 'mix' has been placed on the base, and to do this I use PVA glue and water mixed together as shown in the pictures above. This has two advantages, as it allows me to sculpt the diorama, plus it stops the plaster from cracking as it dries. As when I made my dioramas years ago, this was one of my main problems as the untreated plaster just fell off the base as I placed my 1/35th scale model figures on it. **Note:** When this plaster 'mix' finally dries, it is as hard as concrete. So take your time, and plan ahead on what you want to make. Because if you make a mistake through rushing, and it dries out, you will have a heck of a job getting the stuff off the base again.
Also, at this stage if you want tyre tracks, tank tracks or footprints in the groundwork, this is when I do it. For tyres, you just roll it across the groundwork. For tank tracks, if you cannot take the tracks off the vehicle. I would push the track into the groundwork and then take it off, move along and press the track down again where the last mark was made. This way you should have a continuous track mark in the 'mix'.

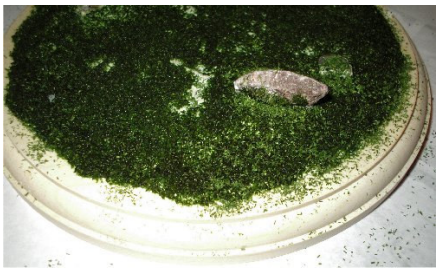
And as you lift off the track, it will take off some of the 'mix', this can be used to represent the churned up earth where the vehicle passed by.

Adding grass, stones and details



This stage is where I add the material to make up the diorama itself, such as the grass, stones and bushes. This just a case of placing the stones into the 'mix', making sure that there are no gaps around the base of them. As you want them being part of the ground, not just placed on the landscape. Unless, you are building holes or small caves under them. Depending on the size of the stone, I sculpt the base around the stone, so the groundwork comes up around the rock. Sometimes if I am using large stones, I use neat PVA glue, as this strengthens and binds the base, the stone and the groundwork together. Adding the grass and pebbles onto the base, is done by shaking some of it out of a bag onto the 'mix', then pressing down gently with your finger to help the material to stick (above left). To see how much of the base is covered by the scatter material, I put the base on its side (middle picture) and I shake it lightly. The picture above right shows the saved scatter on the paper I used.

To further help the material to stick to the base, I use a thin watery mix of PVA glue and brush it onto the material. You will find that some of the grass material will come off on the brush, just add a little bit more to replace it. Note: Don't worry about the material getting darker, this is because of the water in it, it will dry back the original colour.


Any parts of the base that are not covered by the material, can either be covered by using some more of the PVA and then adding some more ground scatter to it. This is shown in the three pictures above, because I have an irregular edge to the groundwork, it can be difficult getting the scatter to stick to it. The pictures above show how I work with the edge of the landscape. Above left shows where I am adding the PVA mix to the edge, above middle shows more of the scatter added to the landscape, above right shows after I have blown lightly onto the edge to remove the loose scatter leaving the edge covered.


In the picture above left, I am using a plastic pen cover to define the edge better; this is done by removing any loose scatter and by pressing inwards against the edge of the plaster 'mix'. In the picture above right, I have added some sand material onto the landscape to break up the colour. When I made the German paratrooper diorama, I wanted a small pool of water around the foot. this was made with neat PVA. dripped into a prepared dip in the groundwork which was then left to dry. Once it has dried it goes clear, showing the colour of the ground work through it.

Fixing the figures to the base - Part Two



I then put the screws in place, and then screw it into the heels of the figure, while pressing downwards with the boot of the figure. Depending on how the base is made, some repairs to the groundwork may have to be carried out after fitting the figure as the screws may remove some of it.
One problem I have found since I have fixed the figure to the base, it the gap between the boot soles and the ground. I will have to fill these gaps with more of the plaster 'mix', once the groundwork has dried off, which I usually leave for about 24 hours to be sure. This is also when I do the final touching up of the groundwork, with either more scatter or I use paint to cover the bare spots.

Other figure's and bases I have made

These are pictures of how I have made my other figure's bases. the first two below show how I have used the plaster 'mix' around the boots, to make it look like the model is standing in mud. I also added some gloss varnish to the base to look like water and wet mud. I also added some of the wet plaster 'mix' to the boots and trouser bottoms. This was painted with the brown colour to look like mud. And again the trousers were drybrushed with a lighter colour to simulate dried mud. The mud around the boots was then painted with the gloss varnish. But, I did find that after a few days the gloss seemed to disappear, so I had to repaint it again. In all I think that I had to give that area maybe 5 coats of varnish to keep the gloss.

The other pictures show how I have got the boots to appear like they have 'sunk' into the groundwork. The method for this is, while the mix for the ground is still tacky. I then placed the figure onto the base, and pressed down on each boot. This will leave an imprint in the ground, and it also causes the groundwork to squish out of the sides of the boot. And as a bonus, I found that it will leave some of the groundwork on the sides of the boots. I took the figure off the base, and cleaned up the underneath of the boots, but I left the mix on the sides to dry. As I wanted to use this to represent mud on the boots once it is painted the same colour as the ground mud. Then once I have fixed the figure to the base with the screws, it looks like the figure is in the groundwork because of it's weight rather than perched on top of it.