

Making a Cast of an Animal Track

Materials in your Coast Kit:

- USG Hydrocal White Gypsum Cement plaster
- Cup and spoon for mixing plaster powder and water
- Cardstock paper and paperclip to make a border around your track
- An empty Ziplock bag to bring your cast home
- Coast Kids Animal Track Guide

You will also need:

- Water to mix with the plaster
- A soft scrub brush or old toothbrush to clean your cast

Warning! DO NOT encase your hand, face, or any other body part with the plaster! It can become quite hot when it is setting and causes burns! DO NOT eat or inhale the plaster powder.



1. Find a track of an animal in soft soil or hard sand. The track should be clearly visible. Tracks in snow are not suitable for making casts, because the plaster emits heat while setting. This would melt the snow around the track before the plaster hardens.



2. Form a ring with the cardstock paper and secure it with the paperclip. Place it around the track. This serves as a border around your cast.



3. Use your cup and spoon to mix the plaster powder with water: First fill the cup almost to the top with plaster. Then add a small amount of water. Mix thoroughly and add water until the mixture has the texture of pancake batter. You have enough plaster for several casts.



4. Pour the plaster mix carefully in your track.
5. Wait until the plaster sets. This may take 30 minutes (or longer) depending on the temperature, the texture of the mix, and the depth of the track.



6. Carefully (!) pry the cast out of the muddy soil or sand. At this time, the plaster is not completely hardened yet, but hard enough to bring the cast home in one piece. Don't brush off the dirt yet. Put the cast in the Ziplock bag and bring it home. You might feel that it is still getting somewhat warm for some time. At home, open the Ziplock bag to let moisture escape.



7. Let the plaster set completely. This takes about 24 hours.

8. The next day, use a brush for dishes or an old toothbrush and water to gently scrub off the dirt from your track cast. You might not be able to clean your cast completely, but you can get most of the dirt off.

Have fun comparing your cast with the tracks in your Animal Track Guide!