



# BASIC TERRAIN 101: PLAYING SURFACE



Part 1 of a Series by J. Cline

**M**any people ask questions about how terrain items are made. This is a collection of some of my thoughts on easy to make basic terrain. First, let me say there are many ways to do things. The methods I will show are not necessarily the best; they are merely the methods I use. In this article I'll discuss a couple basic different playing surfaces.

## PLYWOOD

Often I use a piece of plywood painted a suitable shade of green or brown. Plywood and paint are readily accessible and affordable. If you want a 4x6 table and don't have a saw capable of cutting a sheet of plywood, most places that sell plywood will cut it to size for you. The standard sheet of plywood is 4x8. A 4x8 sheet is perfectly fine if you have space for it. My



current sheet of plywood is painted with Krylon Italian Olive, a medium shade of green. Any shade of green or brown will work, but I recommend a light to medium shade. It'll take more than one can of spray paint to get good coverage, so be sure to pick up a few. When I first started playing wargames, I tried using multiple colors of paint but I didn't like the look.

## FLOCKED FELT

Many people use flocked felt for a playing surface. Felt is available in many colors from shops that carry fabrics. I picked mine up at the local Hobby Lobby. All of the greens at the local Hobby Lobby are all too dark, or too bright, so I picked up a tan color.

1. Roll your felt out on a flat surface. The surface that you roll it out on should be at least the size of your desired gaming surface.

2. Trim the felt to size if necessary.
3. Spray the felt with 3M Spray Adhesive in roughly 2' square areas and lightly flock the area.
4. Repeat step three until the felt is completely covered and let it dry
5. Remove the excess flock.
6. Spray and apply flock to any areas that may have been missed the first time and let it dry.
7. Play a game.



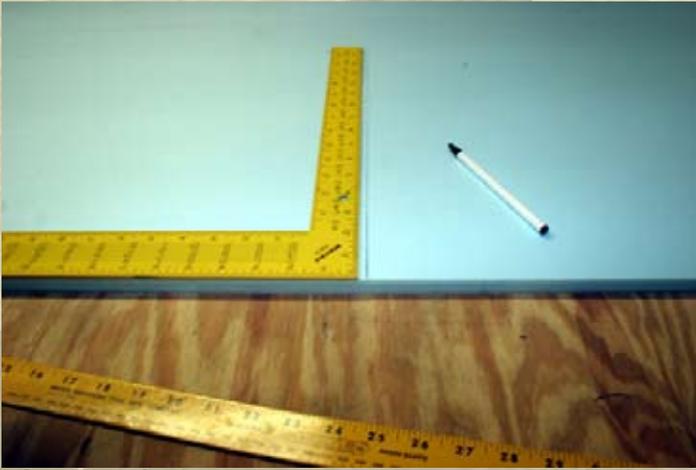
## FLOCKED SURFACE

A flocked surface requires a bit more work, but is still easily accomplished. I started with a 1/2" thick sheet of foam. 1/2" foam is fairly thin and flexible but this doesn't seem to present a problem as long as the foam is stored without any induced curves. Mine is stored in the garage between two spare sheets of plywood.

Here is the sheet of foam I used. It is the high-density type, not the beaded type. I have seen it in blue, and pink. I think the color may have to do with brand. The foam is covered with a thin layer of plastic. I always peel the plastic off of the side I plan on using. If the foam is to be used in multiple layers, I peel the plastic from both sides.



Next trim the foam to length. I use a yardstick and a T-square to be sure my measurements are accurate and my corners are square.



After the foam is cut to size, I paint it with house paint, and while the paint is still wet, sprinkle on some model railroad ballast. Often it is easier to work in small sections to insure that the paint is still wet while applying the ballast. Use any near suitable color of paint. I often browse the paints at the hardware store that have been incorrectly mixed. Often times you can get a good deal on a color somebody else wasn't satisfied with. The color I used on this was a little to orange for my taste, but like I said, it was cheap, and you won't be able to see much of it when you are done anyway. I used the model railroad ballast because I had it on hand, any small stones will work, or even old fashioned cat litter. Don't use anything too large, or future scenery items placed on top won't lay flat. Most of the rocks will be covered in the next step, but they add a little texture, and if the flock gets worn with use in the future, they will add a little detail in the bald spots. You do not need to cover the board with rocks, just a random, light coat.



When the paint is dry it is time to begin flocking. Note that you can begin flocking while the paint is wet, but the finished look is a bit different. I used a variety of colors of flock, but the main color I used was Woodland Scenics Mixed Green. To glue the flock to the board I

used a mixture of water and Elmer's Glue. I mixed the glue roughly one part glue to 4 to 5 parts water. I also keep a spray bottle of water handy. Cover the board with a very light layer of flock. Then apply the glue mixture by gently spraying/dribbling it from the bottle.



The glue should soak out into the flock, in places where the glue doesn't want to spread, mist it with the spray bottle, and the glue mixture should then spread out. Repeat with the flock and glue until you get a fairly decent covering of flock or the dribbling glue washes away previously applied flock. When you reach this stage, apply a light dusting of flock to any areas that may have been disturbed too much by the glue mixture, and take a break for the day to allow the glue to dry. After the glue mixture has dried, apply more flock and glue until the board is flocked to your satisfaction. After you have the board flocked to your satisfaction, apply one last coat of the glue mixture, this time being sure to soak the whole board. When it is completely dry, the board is ready to use.



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