

Building a Better Sandcastle

- 1 Foamy waves splash upon the beach. A misshapen pile of wet sand is out of reach of the waves. Plop! A child dumps a bucket of sand on the mound and then carves lines into it. After some time the pile of sand looks somewhat like a castle. Holes in the sides of the mound look like windows. A tower with flat ledges sticks up on one side, while the wall on the other side has crumbled.

Not Just Child's Play

- 2 On many beaches it is common to see children building sandcastles. However, the results of their efforts seem clumsy or careless when compared to the magnificent castles found in book illustrations and fairy tales. But building a sandcastle that looks as good as a castle in a drawing is not easy.
- 3 Some people think that all that is needed to build a sandy masterpiece is a plastic bucket and a shovel. But building an expert sandcastle really requires patience and attention to detail, as well as the proper tools. Some sandcastle builders are actually professional sand sculptors. They have mastered their art through practicing and learning from other sand sculptors. The tricks these sculptors know can help anyone build a better sandcastle.



Sandcastle on a Public Beach

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Tricks of the Pros

- 4 A strong sandcastle needs sand that is just the right wetness. Dry sand will crumble. Sand that is too wet will be soggy. Some experts say it is best to fill a bucket with water and then add sand to it. They know the sand is just right when it can be molded by hand and keep a shape. To start a sandcastle, expert builders pile sand on the ground. They don't worry about the shape when getting started, and neither should you. Just make sure to have enough sand to complete the project.
- 5 For beginners it may be easier to pack sand into a bucket and tip the bucket over onto the ground. Some experts use wooden beams to make walls to hold the sand together and then pack the sand until it becomes firm. Once the sand is firm enough, they remove the wooden beams, leaving a block of sand. Having compact sand is a really important step in the process of making a great sandcastle. Even experts agree that no matter what you are making, big or small, it is vital to pack the sand tightly.
- 6 It's important to get the main part of the castle just right. If a tall, round tower is the goal, the bottom should be wide and well packed and have a smooth surface. Tall towers will begin to fall if the base is too small.

Tools of the Trade

- 7 After the sandcastle is shaped, it is time to carve the details. Expert sculptors use all kinds of tools to carve. Garden shovels can be used to shape the walls. Pointed tools are good for making smaller details, such as stairs. Some experts use kitchen tools, such as rubber spatulas. Others prefer small artists' tools, such as paint knives. Fun tools for kids include Popsicle sticks and toothpicks.
- 8 When building sandcastles, even the best sculptors make mistakes. But there's no need to worry. A paintbrush can act like an eraser. It can smooth out areas so that an artist can add just the right details. If the brush removes too much sand, the artist simply adds more.

- 9 As experts carve, the sand may start to dry out. Some experts keep a spray bottle full of water nearby to keep the sand damp so it won't crumble. Then when they finish carving, they might add ornaments to their creation. Seashells and seaweed are sometimes used to decorate walls and towers.
- 10 Building a sandcastle is a great way to spend time at the beach. By following this advice from experts, you, too, can make a sandcastle that looks like it belongs in a fairy tale!

**Use “The Sandcastle” (p. 24) to answer questions 26–29.
Then fill in the answers on your answer document.**

26 Lines 1 through 4 are important to the poem because they —

- F** introduce the speaker’s problem
- G** describe the setting
- H** ask the reader important questions
- J** identify the speaker’s friend

27 Which line from the poem best helps the reader picture the speaker’s sandcastle?

- A** Let’s fill a bucket with water and pour it on the land.
- B** To make the sand muddy and damp, to work with it by hand.
- C** To start a mighty castle on the playground made of sand.
- D** Then make the sand like towers; form walls that stretch up high.

28 Read lines 15 and 16 from the poem.

So let's skip on home to dinner, looking back once more to say,
"We built a mighty castle on the playground on this day."

These lines emphasize that the speaker most likely feels —

- F** worried that the sandcastle is not finished
- G** confused about what will happen to the sandcastle
- H** surprised by the height of the sandcastle
- J** pleased to have spent the day working on a sandcastle

29 In stanza 3, the reader can conclude that the speaker —

- A** has more important tasks than finishing the sandcastle
- B** would rather build the sandcastle alone
- C** is not yet satisfied with the sandcastle
- D** is unsure of how the completed sandcastle should look

Use “Building a Better Sandcastle” (pp. 25–27) to answer questions 30–33. Then fill in the answers on your answer document.

- 30** According to information in “Building a Better Sandcastle,” a tall sandcastle tower might fall if —
- F** its base is too small to support it
 - G** it is not built by an expert sculptor
 - H** too many details are carved into the sandcastle
 - J** tools are not used when building the sandcastle

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- 31** In paragraph 1, the prefix *mis-* helps the reader determine that the word misshapen means —
- A** badly shaped
 - B** having many shapes
 - C** before being shaped
 - D** being shaped again

32 The author wrote this selection mainly to —

- F** provide the history of sandcastle building
- G** explain how to construct a sandcastle successfully
- H** tell about some famous sandcastle builders
- J** describe different kinds of sandcastles

33 According to the selection, a paintbrush can be used when building a sandcastle in order to —

- A** correct errors
- B** pack the sand
- C** add decorations
- D** carve details

Use “The Sandcastle” and “Building a Better Sandcastle” to answer questions 34–37. Then fill in the answers on your answer document.

34 The speaker in the poem and the author of the selection both emphasize the importance of —

- F** selecting the perfect location for building a sandcastle
- G** using items from nature to decorate a sandcastle
- H** mixing the sand just right before building a sandcastle
- J** finishing the details of a sandcastle in just one day

35 With which statement would the poet and the author of the selection most likely agree?

- A** It is important to ask for help when building a sandcastle.
- B** The details of a sandcastle should be carved by hand.
- C** Children like building sandcastles more than adults do.
- D** A well-made sandcastle takes time to build.

- 36** How do “The Sandcastle” and “Building a Better Sandcastle” differ in their description of sandcastles?
- F** Only the poem describes the steps to follow while building a sandcastle.
 - G** Only the poem includes a list of tools useful for building a sandcastle.
 - H** Only the poem provides a personal account of building a sandcastle.
 - J** Only the poem identifies problems with building a sandcastle.

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- 37** Read line 10 from the poem.

Add more water now and then; don’t let that sand get dry!

Which sentence from “Building a Better Sandcastle” suggests that experts have a similar concern when building sandcastles?

- A** *Once the sand is firm enough, they remove the wooden beams, leaving a block of sand.*
- B** *It’s important to get the main part of the castle just right.*
- C** *After the sandcastle is shaped, it is time to carve the details.*
- D** *Some experts keep a spray bottle full of water nearby to keep the sand damp so it won’t crumble.*