Things
From
The
Basement
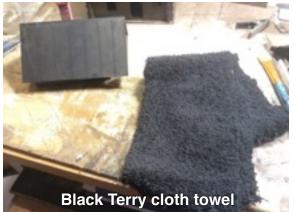
# Thatched roofs

What is a Thatched Roof? Basically it is the craft of building a roof with dry vegetation such as straw, water reed, or palm fronds, and layering the vegetation so as to shed water away from the inner roof. It is a very old roofing method and has been used in both tropical and temperate climates. Thatch is still employed by builders in developing countries, usually with low-cost, local vegetation. This process is used throughout the world and has been in use from the early development of human civilization. This instructional will hopefully help you recreate this look on your models with ease.

**Materials:** There are a few ways people model thatched roofs. This is just one way to do it. Many folks think of this as the "facecloth or towel method". You will need some white (PVA) glue (I used wood glue, which is fine), scissors, a terry-cloth towel, and the model roof from your kit. You will also need some acrylic paints - discussed later in this tutorial. Make sure you have a workspace that can get messy.

**Model roof all done**



**Black Terry cloth towel**

**Build Your Model:** You will need to build your model roof first. Chimney and all. I find it helpful to paint all the parts as well.

**Dry :** Make sure all your parts and paint are actually dry on the model.

**Scissors :** Make sure you have some good sharp scissors. Use ones made for cutting cloth if you can as these are the best. Nothing is more frustrating than scissors that just do not cut well.

**Terry Cloth Towel :** I use either tan, light or dark brown or black towels. White is also possible, but you will be using more paint, as you will have to apply a lot to get it to the base color you want. I get my towels NEW at one of the big box stores, as they are cheap (mine are $2.00 USD for a whole bath towel). They go along way. I make sure that the nap is thick enough, you want long loops if you can. You do NOT want any print on the face towel as it often shows through. You do NOT want any patterned texture either as this will not look natural. Quick rule of thumb: The lighter the color, the newer the roof while the darker the color, the older the roof is. I like using the dark looking black material as I prefer my roof looking old, and in need of replacement. My thinking is, considering roofs take time and money, most peasants and the poor do not really have the time and money to replace a whole roof, so they put it off for as long as they can. If you like the newer golden colored roofs most people make, that's great. The end color is up to you!



**First step - Cutting strips:** Get your scissors and firstly, cut off all the knit borders and decoration off the towel until all you have is a large panel of pure terry-cloth. Then, start cutting this into long strips of 1" (2.5cm) widths. Because measuring them and marking them is a pain (I know, I have tried), I just use the thickness of my thumb as a guide as I cut. Don't cut yourself - just go slowly. I find this is much faster and easier a method as my thumb is about the width we are striving for. These widths do not have to be perfect. Just try and keep it to roughly the same width consistently. If you mess up and cut too thin, you can simply snip that part off and save it for fill-ins later.

**Application:** First, place some PVA glue down onto the <u>bottom</u> edge of the roof. Then, spread it all out using your finger. Once the area is coated, take your first strip of terry cloth and lay it down. Let the ends hang over the edges a bit on either side. You can measure them if you like or, you can do as I do by laying the first strip on, then merely cutting off the longest edge so that I'm ready for the next. Press the strip down into the terry cloth so it makes very good contact with the glue. I have found faster drying "Tacky Glue" PVA to be ideal, as it grabs faster and begins to dry faster too.

*Tip 1:* Let all ends and edges over hang a bit. Even curl the edges down over the roof, so it makes it look like the "grass" is hanging down on the roof.

*Tip 2:* Always remember you should be working from the BOTTOM of the roof UP to its peak.

Keep repeating this step as you move UP the roof towards its peak, but always *remember*: You want the following layer to hang just over the last one so its like roofing tiles. Any part that has a chimney (or other obstruction), you merely cut pieces to go around the structure as shown. Make sure you keep the same number of rows.

*Always overlap them, just like a tiled roof would!*

*Repeat .... and ...*

*Repeat .... and ...*

# Modeling Tips



*The top ...the final step....*



**The Top:** When you come to the very top of the roof, usually there will be a gap at the top. This gap will need a strip to cover it. If you have no gap, you may skip this step.
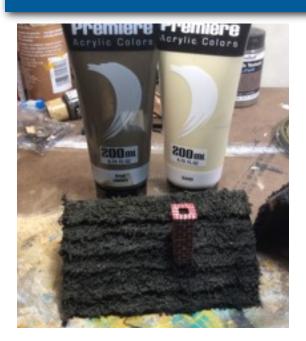
**Fill the gap:** Take one, final strip of terry cloth (sometimes it's the same width of the strips you have while other times it may be too narrow or wide). You may have to cut a piece JUST for this step. Now glue it to the top of the roof making sure it overlaps appropriately.

**Trim:** When the whole roof is dry, it is ready for trimming. With your scissors, carefully trim off all the overhanging extra material. I personally like to leave a little, so as not to expose the roof underneath but, it's fine if you want to remove all extra.Trim off any stray threads that may have come undone. You are now done, and ready to paint some color or highlights on the roof.

*Dry Brushing: This is a very common painting technique used by all modelers at one point or another. The dry-brush technique can be achieved with water-based media such as inks, acrylic paints, tempera paints or watercolor paints. The brush should first be dry or squeezed dry of all water. The brush should then be loaded with paint that is highly viscous or thick. This is usually done by putting on some paint, and then wiping much of it off on a paper towel or cardboard. You then paint on the model with the brush loaded with the slightly dry paint on it. You can find many videos online if you need further instruction.*

**Painting:** The colors you use will depend on what color you chose for your base color. That said, the technique is the same regardless of what you have chosen. The basic principle is this: Always work from dark to light.

Once again, we will use acrylic paints. I use the cheapest I can for the amount. You are not required to do so, it's just that the modeling paints most of us use might be a very expensive way to cover our bigger scenery models. You will need to use a flat wide brush and you will use the *dry-brushing technique (shown on previous page)* to cover the roof.

In my example, I went with a black cloth so that my roof will appear to be a very old thatched roof. I used a dark brown (specifically Raw Umber) for my first color. My highlight color is Sand (although any off white color would have worked).

**Step 1:** Dry-brush on the first color (the DARKER color) onto the roof. I always paint downwards in the direction of the thatch as when this paint dries, it will harden and I want my thatch to be hanging in the right direction. I keep doing this build up until the paint is noticeable (the terry cloth soaks up a lot at first, and often, the first few times looks like it all dried up, or it may still looks black).

**Step 2:** Once the dark color has built up, it's time to add the highlight color. I did this by mixing just a bit of my Raw Umber into the Sand color. This way it's not TOO stark of a change. I then dry brushed the roof by painting downward in the same way as Step 1.

**Step 3:** Once the mixed color is finished being applied, then apply your lightest color to give it one more *dry-brush* highlight or, in areas I want a bit of "pop" to it. This is usually on the very top, the edges, and anywhere that the thatch overlap.

Painted but only with brown coat

Not painted

**Finished versions with highlight painted coat on top.**