

You've always dreamed of building a truly impressive sandcastle with the kids, but every time you try, you end up with a big pile of crumbled sand.

Ted Siebert, a Woodstock sculptor who makes his living creating masterpieces out of sand, says it just takes the right approach.

Start. Siebert suggests packing very wet sand into a five-gallon bucket with the bottom sawed off. Place the bucket top (wide side) down on a smooth patch of sand. "Let the water drain out a little bit. When you lift the bucket right out, then you have a nice block of sand to carve."

Shape. Use plastic knives to cut a roof and walls, windows and doors. Work from top to bottom to avoid



loose sand from the top from ruining previous work. Older kids can each pick a side or a task (such as windows or tiles) to work on. Younger kids may need to each make their own castle. Be sure to allow plenty



of room to work, so they don't knock other's work down.

Detail. A stick or pencil works well for scratching brick patterns into the walls and placing small mirrors can give windows an authentic look. Cookie cutters also make sharp lines that show up nicely.

Decorate. Seaweed and shells are fun; but add a touch of class to your family's castle by letting your kids spraypaint it with water-soluble paints. They don't harm the environment and even the simplest castle will look more professional in color.

Extra. For a working moat, Siebert suggests burying plastic wrap in the sand surrounding the castle. Cover with a layer of sand to hold the plastic in place and fill it with water. Be sure not to leave any items you bring from home on the beach.

The lessons your children learn in creativity, patience and confidence will be well worth the effort, Siebert says. "Little kids, when they look at their sculptures, are just as proud of theirs as I am of mine."

Ted Siebert, owner of The Sand Sculpture Company, is author of Sandcastle in a Box (available to order at his Web site, www.sand-sculpting.com.)



Sand sculptor Ted Siebert demonstrates how to build a great sandcastle.

