



Conserve O Gram

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Ring Supports For Pottery And Round-Based Objects

Providing proper support for pottery and other objects with rounded bases has always been problematic. For display in exhibit cases a satisfactory mount should be aesthetically pleasing and unobtrusive. Whether for storage or exhibit, the support should properly support the base of the object, help alleviate stresses caused by structural instability, and prevent damage from vibration or movement.

A ring support that is economical, easy to construct, and relatively quick to make can be formed from expanded polyethylene foam rods covered with a neutral colored cotton knit fabric. The rings can then be used for both exhibit and storage.

Materials

- Polyethylene foam rod 3/4" diameter (Note: use only *polyethylene* foam rods. Commercial *polyurethane* backer rod is not chemically inert and absorbs moisture.)
- Cotton knit fabric, washed. Select a color complementary to the object for exhibit.
- Hot melt acrylic adhesive with a high melting point
- Small acrylic dowel or stick from a cotton swab
- Needle and colorfast thread

Making the Ring

1. Cut the foam rod to length based on the circumference of the bottom of the pot. Use a length large enough to support the sides of the pot and prevent the base from touching the work surface. Experience will help you determine the best size ring for each pot you are supporting. As an aid in determining the size of the first ring you make, use these dimensions as a sample: foam rod 3/4" in diameter and cut 15" long. This sample will be suitable for a number of pots. For smaller pots, use a 1/2" diameter rod (Figure 1).

Note: Polyethylene tubes can be cut as needed. This can be more economical but time consuming. Sharpen the end of a metal pipe that is the desired diameter. Push the sharpened end through a block of polyethylene to get a cylindrical length of foam.



Figure 1

2. Cut a strip of cotton knit fabric the length and circumference of the foam rod. The fabric may be cut in a continuous strip when making multiple pot rings. Set the fabric aside.
3. Form a circle by joining the rod ends together (Figure 2). Cut a 1/8" diameter solid acrylic dowel or the stick of a cotton swab, 1 to 1 1/2" long. (When using polyethylene foam that is 1/2" in diameter, use a 1/16" diameter dowel.)

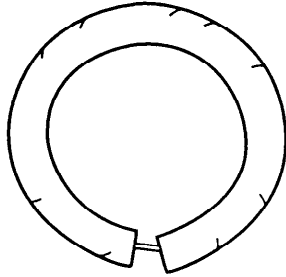


Figure 2

With the dowel, make a hole in the center of each end of the foam rod. Coat one end of the dowel with hot glue, and allow the hot glue to cool slightly before applying as it will soften the acrylic. Insert the piece so that half its length fits into the hole created on one end. Put glue on the other end of the dowel and the foam rod.

Insert the dowel into the hole, and hold ends firmly together until the glue is set (about one minute). This forms a circle ready to be covered.

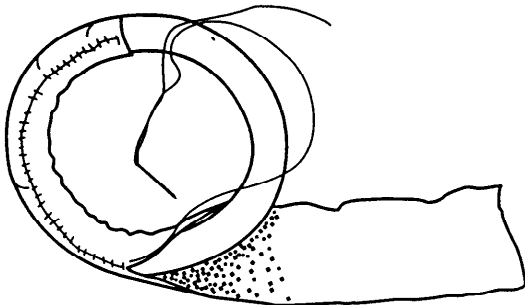


Figure 3

4. Cover the foam with cotton knit fabric. Wrap the fabric around the foam ring and sew the edges of the fabric together using a tacking stitch. Draw the inside edges of the fabric together, but do not overlap them (Figure 3). Stretch the length of the fabric slightly as you sew, keeping the stitches small for a smooth finish. Periodically run the thread through the foam ring to keep the knit fabric anchored. The seam should be on the bottom of the ring and slightly toward the inside so it will not be visible. Butt the ends of the fabric together, trimming away any extra. Join the ends together using a tacking stitch (Figure 4).

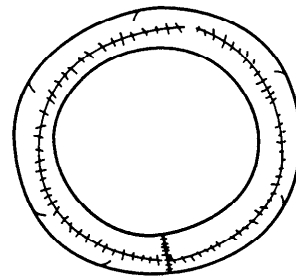


Figure 4

5. If the bottom of the pot needs additional support, a knit circle of fabric can be sewn to the tube. Cut the fabric 1/4" smaller than the inside diameter of the ring and locate it close to the top of the ring, stretching and pinning it in place at four evenly spaced points (Figure 5). Sew the circle to the ring along the circle edge using a running stitch. This will cradle the base of the vessel while conforming to its shape and keep the base from resting on or coming in contact with a shelf or exhibit case bottom (Figure 6).

Caution: Make sure the additional fabric support is not so taut that it makes the pot unsteady.

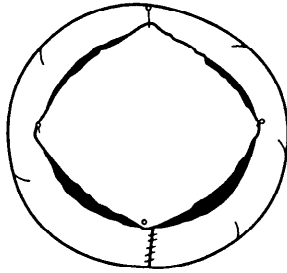


Figure 5

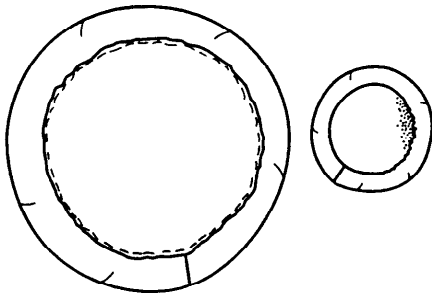


Figure 6

Sources

Polyethylene Foam Rod 3/4" and Hot Melt Adhesive can be purchased from: University Products, 517 Main Street, P.O. Box 101, Holyoke, MA 01041-0101; 1-800-762-1165.

Polyethylene foam rods, 3/4" and 1/2" diameter can be purchased from Advanced Packaging, Inc. Seton Business Park, 4818 Seton Drive, Baltimore, MD 21215; (301) 358-9444.

Extruded acrylic rod, 1/16" and 1/8" can be purchased from Read Plastics, 12331 Wilkins Avenue, Rockville, MD 20852; (301) 881-7900, 1-800-638-6651.

Cotton knit fabric, needles, thread, scissors, and tape measure can be purchased from local fabric stores.

References

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Rose, Carolyn L., and Amparo R. de Torres. *Storage of Natural History Collections: Ideas and Practical Solutions*. Pittsburgh: Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, 1992.

Schlichting, Carl. "Working with Polyethylene Foam and Fluted Plastic Sheet." *Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) Technical Bulletin* No. 14, 1994.

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