

How to make cob...

Cob is mixed with a combination of stirring and compression. In my experience, the best way to achieve this combination is with feet and tarps.

For more information, visit <http://weblife.org/cob/>.

Videos:

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hzi3BiaVDG8>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2i1cHHJAguA>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1GqTRpXGpA>

Clear a few places at the site for mixing areas. The closer they are to the foundation, the less energy it'll take to get the cob to its destination. Inside the building is a good place for at least one mixing area. Leave enough room to walk around the mixing sites easily. Use your brain to minimize work. If you've imported ingredients, pile them in sensible places to streamline the process. For example, if the sand pile is two steps closer to the building (but not crowding walkways) you'll save miles of steps during the building process.

If you need to add sand or clay to your soil, you can measure out proportions by the shovel full, or by the bucket full until you can do it by eye and by feel.

Throw some soil on a tarp

Break up the clods with your tamper or your shoes

Adding sand

If you are adding sand, shovel the sand onto the tarp and stir it into the crushed soil until the two are well-mixed. You can do this by pulling up the edges of the tarp and rolling the ingredients around on the tarp.



Adding clay

If the soil you are working with is so sandy that you have to add clay, you can either add clay soup or add dry powdered clay to dry sand. Wear a mask when adding and stirring dry clay to your mix.



Stirring and treading the mix

Stirring and treading well is a big part of the magic that turns your ingredients into cob.



To stir, **stand on one edge of the tarp and lift up the tarp on the opposite side of the mix. Pull it *towards* you, turning the mix over onto itself.** Don't lift the edge of the tarp at your feet or push the mix to turn it. That's too hard on your back. The more you roll the tarp, the faster the cob mixes.

Then add **water**. You're after a cookie dough consistency. **Tread on the mix with your feet.** It's easier to feel the mix with bare feet, and for some mysterious reason, bare feet mix the cob faster than shoed feet. Don't despair, your feet will return to nature and toughen up quickly.

Stir the mix often by pulling up the edges of the tarp, while you're treading. It's impossible to tread the mix too much, so go for it. You'll notice how it changes plasticity as you tread on it.



Generally cob is 70% sand 30% clay rich soil, with a flake of straw and water. This mix had more clay, since that was the local resource at hand.

How to make cob... Another way to look at it!

Cob is an ancient building material that is composed of sand, earth high in clay, straw, and water. These materials are mixed together by hands and feet to form a mud that when dry, is nearly as hard as concrete. Cob is used to construct benches, tables, cottages, and even houses. Go Green!

Things you'll need:

- Clay mud
- Straw
- Sand

Instructions:

1. Spread out a plastic tarp and spread sand over the top of it. This sand needs to be mixed into the clay and spreading it onto the plastic tarp first helps prevent the clay from sticking to the tarp. Sand and earth with clay are the main ingredients, so the sand content can be low as 50 percent and as high as 85 percent.
2. Locate dirt that is primarily clay and start shoveling it onto the tarp. The clay should be moist. About 4 shovels full will do it.
3. Have someone help you lift the edges of the tarp to mix the sand and clay together. Then lay the tarp down and begin to stomp on the clay, with your bare feet, mixing it up.
4. Add approximately 2 armfuls of straw to the mixture. Drop the straw in as you are stomping on the clay.
5. It can be very tiring to mix the clay and straw but keep going until you see the straw throughout the clay. The consistency of the cob should be like cookie dough.
6. An easy way to check the consistency is by "loafing". This is when the material folds over when the tarp is lifted and looks like a "loaf" of bread.
7. Now you are ready to make an oven, wall, a shed or a house!