

APPENDIX A



A GUIDE FOR RESPONSIBLE PARTICIPANTS

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INTRODUCTION: ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is for you the new responsible participant, to conduct your own Earth Forums. If you are reading this and have not participated in an Earth Forum apprenticeship, please refrain from conducting Earth Forum until you have participated in at least five Earth Forums and worked closely with a responsible participant (See Appendix 2 for more information on the apprenticeship). Working with the instruments and materials of this Social Sculpture rely much on your own abilities, your own insights, and previous experiences. This guide offers suggestions of how best to establish your Earth Forums and remind you of any details you might have forgotten during your apprenticeship. The guide explores “how” to approach people and invite them to conduct an Earth Forum; to “what” physical forms are needed to set the scene; details of various practices used and other vital information that you might need to keep Earth Forum in motion. This process is dynamic and constantly being refined by the context and needs of the participants, we value any feedback from your experiences with conducting Earth Forums. This is the first draft of the handbook, we look forward to refining it further with you insights and experiences.

There are four major sections to this guide:

1. **INTRODUCTION:** A brief background to the Earth Forum and Social Sculpture.
2. **FEATURES TO CONSIDER:** Considering the specific features of the Earth Forum process.
3. **SETTING THE SHAPE & FORM:** A detailed account of how to set up Earth Forum from inviting participants to setting up the instruments for the process.
4. **GUIDING AN EARTH FORUM:** This is a step-by-step support for how to guide Earth Forum.

INTRODUCTION: BEING AN EARLTHLING

Us humans emerged on earth, we are *earthlings*. What makes humans particularly unique, as apposed to other earthlings, is that we dream and imagine, we reshape our own lives and transform our environments. We do this together, and we achieve much when we share our ideas and knowledge. The word best used to describe this sharing is *forum*. This is when people come together to meet, to learn and where ideas and views on a particular issue can be exchanged. One cannot be human without the soil and the earth, and we cannot be a forum, in the traditional sense of the word, without being outside. Yet today most forums, learning, and exchanges happen indoors, with the earth usually excluded from the forum. When you think about it, we really are earthlings, everything we eat, drink, breathe or own has come from the earth and when we die, our bodies return to soil. Yet today we are all too quick to wash out the dirt, with whitening detergent, and sanitise our homes and children with a cocktail of chemicals. How did we get to this point? We somehow managed to use every little piece of the earth in our daily lives without providing ourselves with the time or space to include the earth in our forums, and in our plans for progress.

Each of us dreams, imagines, and reshapes our lives and immediate environments every day. We do not always realise it, but we are all practicing artists sculpting our worlds with as such creative freedom and artistic vigor as any artist does in our traditional understanding of art. Our capacities to imagine and to listen and learn from each other is what has enabled us to achieve so much, and perhaps forgetting to use these capacities as well as forgetting we are earthlings has led us into the era of climate change and environmental degradation we now occupy.

Earth Forum has emerged from the territory of Social Sculpture, which is a progression of art emerging from German artist Joseph Beuy's "expanded concept of art" from the 1970's. It is based on the understanding that every human being has the capacity to transform their own lives and every human being is essentially an artist. Social Sculpture works towards developing new fields of awareness, through creating practices, instruments (of various shapes and forms) that engage our imaginations and artistic capacities to help transform our consciousness through a specific social exchange, a social sculpture. Earth Forum is a social sculpture that offers new ways in which people of every age, gender or ethnicity can meaningfully develop their capacity to imagine, listen and exchange about how they might live on this earth. It is an accessible process that relies on a *Responsible Participant* who is in some ways a facilitator, a responsible person who guides the forum (but is different from a facilitator as this person participates in the process as much as the other participants). The *Responsible Participant* could be anyone wanting to use this social sculpture in their community, and through a short three day apprenticeship will be able to use the instruments and guide the process with ease and confidence.

Earth Forum instruments in its basic form consists of an unbleached, natural-calico-cotton, oiled, circular cloth (1.5m diameter) but can be enhanced with the addition of a round wooden table, identical wooden chairs or stools, and a simple canvas tent that can allow the participants to work in any site with relative comfort and protection from the elements. The participants work with the earth (soil, rocks, plant matter, humus) collected from the surrounding area; this earth plays a central role in creating the shape and form of an Earth Forum and is the tangible form that the participants are able to connect with (it is the primary *connective aesthetic*, which simply relates to the opposite of anaesthetic, it enlivens our imagination, allows us to perceive shapes and forms with new eyes). The individually collected earth is placed on the cloth by the participants through a specific process. The cloth is placed either on a round table or upon the floor, with the participants seated in a circle round the cloth. Within this shape and form the participants proceed with the creative exchange offered in Earth Forum. The oiled cloth will over time collect the traces of earth from each forum and soil mark embodies each participant's listening, sharing and learning.

Earth Forum offers new practices and instruments that can be used by different people together, to meaningfully uncover their own agenda and their own ways of dealing with their particular

situation. This also has discernible effects on one's ability and motivation to engage with difficult and sometimes overwhelming aspects of living in a climate change era. Imagination plays a significant role in our work towards an ecologically sustainable future. Especially when tackling the daunting complexity of the problem, and considering the responsibility we all feel to do something to effect a meaningful positive change. Yet we have seen that Environmental Education in the form of mere "raising awareness" does little to change actions, it requires more than this. Responsibility does not arise from moral imperatives, or merely having a raised awareness, but is rather through developing an ability to respond; the ability to transform ones own life, and ones own surroundings. This can be closely linked to the aesthetic dimension of Earth Forum, and how we use our imagination, our inner artist, to see the world we have lived in, live in now and the world we would like to live in.

Earth Forum offers new ways in which people can meaningfully explore what it means to live on this planet, through a carefully forged social sculpture process. We have successfully piloted this process across South Africa and have enabled incredible connective practices between people from very different walks of life, from farmers, governmental officials, activists, scientists, entrepreneurs, teachers, artists, learners and community leaders.

FEATURES TO CONSIDER: RESPONSIBLE PARTICIPANT

When a group of people work together with the purpose of enabling everyone to participate, they usually work with a facilitator, moderator or guide. In the Earth Forum process we have found it helpful to think of this person as a *responsible participant*. This is different from a facilitator –who to some extent stands outside of the process. It is also different from the role of a moderator. There is nothing to moderate in Earth Forum. Although facilitators and moderators can be helpful roles, they also create a separation between the facilitator or moderator and everyone else. To be a responsible participant means to *actively participate* in all the processes oneself. Whatever everyone else around the cloth explores, the responsible participant explores too. The reason for this is to put the responsible participant on an EQUAL basis with everyone else. The responsible participant has thoughts, feelings, doubts, confusions just like everyone else. The difference between the responsible participant and everyone else is that as well as participating in the process, you also introduce the process and make sure that everyone knows what to do. You only intervene if no one knows how to go on, or if people have forgotten some important aspect of the work, like actively listening to each other, and are slipping into a discussion or a debate. As responsible participant your role is sometimes different from the others, it is important that you explain this idea of the 'responsible participant' at the beginning. You can say that most of the time you will be participating like everyone else, but if it is necessary you will step out of this role for a moment and take some responsibility for moving things on. You can also explain that in the

beginning you are setting the framework for the process to begin, and that after this you will participate in the process just like everyone else.

FEATURES TO CONSIDER: ACTIVE LISTENING

Listening is not a passive process. When I listen to you it creates thoughts and images, one could say, movements, in me. But these movements usually have to do with my response to what you think and see. I agree with some things that you say and disagree with others. Some what I hear relates perhaps to my own ideas and thoughts. So whilst listening to you I already go off into my own world. Perhaps I do not even hear properly what you say, because I am so involved with liking and disliking or adding my own points of view. Often I can hardly wait for you to finish so I can put forward my point of view. And if we then start discussing what you have said we can quickly get into a to and fro of arguing, trying to persuade, debating the pros and cons of what we each are saying. This kind of listening has – one could say – mainly to do with antipathy and sympathy. But to really hear what another has to say we have to remove the agreement and disagreement. We have to try and stay *with* the person, with their pictures, with their thoughts, and see what *they* see and feel, without agreeing and disagreeing and letting our own thoughts run on internally. A good way to do this and focus more sharply on what someone is saying – to become a more *active listener* – is to consider what is being said in three ways. We can listen for the content of what is being said, we can listen to the feeling with which it is being said, and we can try and get a sense of the impulse or motivation in what is being said.

FEATURES TO CONSIDER: EVERYONE SHOULD PARTICIPATE

In an Earth Forum everyone should get a sense that we *are all participants* in our world, even if we feel invisible and helpless. So, the process should be structured so that everyone has a *chance* to participate.

One question is how to make this possible without people feeling compelled to participate and that they are not free. Even if it is difficult for some people to speak because they are naturally shy, or not very talkative, it is important to use a process that encourages everyone to speak and to feel at ease. If we do not set up a process that invites and encourages everyone to speak, only the few who usually speak will contribute. They will fill the space whilst the others observe in silence. And those you observe in silence might also not just be quiet because they are shy. People can also be quiet because they are a bit lazy to formulate their thoughts, or because they are not really interested in sharing what they think with others. A good way to enable the participation of everyone is to emphasise at the start that every person sees something when they look at a situation. Everyone has something to contribute, even if it is their questions. It is very important to ensure that there is enough time for this process. Giving things enough time is about allowing things to unfold. Giving ourselves and each the space to go beyond what we already know; to go beyond our habitual points of view. It is also my to stress that there are no right or wrong things to

say and that one does not need to share everything one thought or felt.

SETTING THE SHAPE & FORM: INVITING PARTICIPANTS

Inviting participants to an Earth Forum requires some thoughtful consideration and one should be very specific and clear about the requirements for participation. In order for an Earth Forum to work well one should suggest the following in your invitation:

- **TIME DONATION AND COMMITMENT** - Each participant should donate at least three hours of their full attention for the process to be effective. Its recommended that the group should not exceed more the 25 people. Each participant should be well aware of their time donation and commitment to the process and cannot take phone calls, notes or film an Earth Forum. If a participant leaves before the process is complete this does not allow for an effective Earth Forum for all those involved, in this case it can be requested of the participant to attend another scheduled Earth Forum to which he or she can commit for the full duration. **ANONYMITY** - If you are using Earth Forum with a group that are conflicted or struggling over a contested issue, it is important to offer anonymity to the participants from the start. Unlike workshops and talkshops, participants need not introduce themselves during or before the process, but can do so if they want to. **OUTCOMES** - The outcome will be an exploration into developing new capacities that help one truly listen to someone else, as well as create an imaginative and innovative way of seeing how and others live in this world. One can assure invitees that an outcome will come from attending and participating in the process.

SETTING THE SHAPE & FORM: INSTRUMENTS

Earth Forum in its basic form consists of a white, oiled, circular cloth (1.5m diameter), but can be enhanced by the addition of a round wooden table, identical wooden chairs or stools, and a canvas tent that can allow the participants to work in any context with relative comfort and protection from the elements (details on each instrument are found below). The participants work with the earth (soil, rocks, plant matter, humus) collected from the surrounding area of an Earth Forum; this earth plays a central role in creating the shape and form of an earth forum and is the tangible form that the participants are able to connect with. The individually collected earth is placed on the centrally placed cloth on a round table or the floor. The participants are seated round the table and/or round patch of ground and cloth, and proceed with the creative exchange (details below), working with the physical form of earth in their hands to start with and then on the cloth for the duration. The oiled cloth will over time collect the stains from participants at every Earth Forum.

We have found that the process is more comfortable and has greater impact for the length of time dedicated if people are seated as opposed to sitting on the floor. If no chairs and stools available

then sitting on the floor on a large square unbleached natural canvas (approximately 4X 4 m) is preferable. A similar seating arrangement must be made for all who participate in order for them to be level and equal. It is also preferable to use seating made from wood or natural materials, but it is most essential that the seating is identical. Make an executive decision when selecting seating arrangements and try to work with what is available in the space in which you are setting an Earth Forum. Therefore the key components of seating must be selected in this order: 1. Identical seats ; 2. Comfort; and 3. Naturally made.

It is recommended to seat the participants around a round wooden table that can comfortably fit the 2 m diameter cloth. If a round table is not available, then a square table can do, but a rectangular is not advised. The participants must be seated in a perfect circle for comfort and ease of listening, speaking and viewing each other. Conducting an Earth Forum on the floor will work for those who are capable of sitting on the floor. However the round table Earth Forum has a recognisable shape and form, made more visible by the earth mounds on the table cloth.

SETTING THE SHAPE & FORM: SELECTING THE SPACE

The most ideal setting for an Earth Forum is outdoors. This need not necessarily be a green space like a park, garden or wild area, but can also be an urban or industrial area. Try choosing a space that is unusual and strange and not like any other setting that would normally hold meetings/workshops. This aims to steer the Earth Forum away from a regular outdoor lunch or gathering and into something curious. Earth Forums have been conducted in a number of different environments: dry river beds; road sides; city pavements; public parks; buildings entrances; amphitheatres; lecture theatres; and in more traditional seminar-room settings. The context has major influences on an Earth Forum and helps establish the shape and form of the social sculpture. Keep in mind that this is a gathering of people thinking carefully and deeply about what it means to live on the earth and so choosing a site that might reveal how we are connected or disconnected from the earth is crucial to the process.

SETTING THE SHAPE & FORM : RESPECT FOR THE SPACE

Earth Forum instruments must be handled with great care and respect. We might be working with what are traditionally every-day objects like an ordinary table, cloth, tent, table and chairs, however in an Earth Forum, each of these instruments have a particular purpose and sense of being in their shape and form. It is important to ensure that participants do not use the table in a traditional sense, i.e. to hold cups, books or bags. When welcoming the participants, make them aware that the *“chairs, table and cloth are very particular instruments we will be using in this process, and to please to respect them for this purpose”*. Ensure that people do not sit down in the designated space until everyone is present and ready to do so as a group. One could arrange seating away from the space, while waiting for the group to gather.

GUIDING AN EARTH FORUM: BEING THERE

The responsible participant is the facilitator who both participates and guides an Earth Forum. In order to do both participate and guide the responsible participant must try to be as present as possible. Their role is to inspire a sense of calm composure and gentle approach while also being firm in reminding participants to try to keep to the tasks at hand and that the time allocated is used wisely. 'Being present' refers to maintaining an awareness of both your own thoughts, feelings and impetus as well as those of the individuals in the group and how they are responding to the tasks given to them. The responsible participant needs to be empathetic to the needs of the participant and sometimes might need to adjust the process to accommodate individuals in the group.

GUIDING AN EARTH FORUM: STEP BY STEP

STAGE 1: Time requirements and housekeeping: It is important before you start the Earth Forum that all the participants are comfortable and relaxed. You can recommend that they visit the toilet, eat and drink before the process, knowing that two to three hours will lapse without any disturbance. Make it very clear that if participants are due to leave before the process is complete, they should rather participate in another Earth Forum that can be scheduled in the future, and if not, will not be able to attend at all. Earth Forum has nine stages that can be followed easily, to help guide and shape the exchange. We suggest that you follow this template as much as possible, but realise that the process can be flexible depending on the individuals in the group.

STAGE 2: Introducing the responsible participant: Start by explaining carefully and clearly who you are and how you as the responsible participant will guide the process

"Earth Forum is led by a responsible participant, who helps shape and guide this imaginative exchange. A responsible participant is not a facilitator, negotiator, mediator, or moderator as there is nothing to negotiate, mediate or moderate in Earth Forum. The responsible participant's role is simply to participate in the exchange, but also to assist participants in developing their capacities to imagine and listen. I will therefore come in and out of the process as necessary. Also describe how we keep them to time..."

STAGE 3: Every human being has the capacity to imagine: The next step is to introduce the imaginative capacities we all have and to explore carefully how these can be used.

"Every human being has this amazing ability to make pictures in their mind, to imagine the past, present and even look into the future. We each have access to this space in our minds, a dome within which we can all make pictures and creatively explore the world. This imaginative capacity allows us to experience each other worlds and to appreciate the differences"

STAGE 4: Collecting a handful of earth: When instructing the participants to go collect their handful

of earth, remind them of their amazing capacity to imagine and visualize and ask them to try use this capacity during their collecting experience. They will have about five minutes to explore the surrounds and find their handful of earth. When everyone has returned to sit, ask the group to hold their earth and quietly shape their picture of their experience in their minds. Also ask the participants to try not to speak to each other during this process. Once all the participants have arrived back with their handful of soil, remind them about working with their imaginative space to collect their thoughts and shape their picture of their experience. This takes time, so give the group about five minutes to shape their pictures, it might feel like a long time to sit and work in silence, but it is important that each person has the time and space to shape their own picture.

STAGE 5: Developing the capacity to actively listen: Before each person begins to share their picture, their experiences, feelings and other thoughts of collecting their handful of earth its important to talk about developing the capacity to actively listen..

"In this space we will work towards trying to really listen to each other and see each other's pictures. To do this it will require using your own space, your imagination to try picture what the other person is saying. Try to listen without judging, reacting or responding to what the person is saying, but rather try to stay with that person's picture."

STAGE 6: Sharing your picture: After some time has passed, open it up for someone to share their picture. Suggest to the group that responses need not come consecutively in the circle, but rather when the participant feels ready. The participants are welcome to use as much time as they need, but the responsible participant might guide them back if they go off on a tangent, or ask them to wrap up if they are taking up too much time. Find the right time to share your picture/experiences, as the responsible participant, you must also participate. After each person shares their picture they can place their handful of earth on the Earth Forum oil cloth.

STAGE 7: What are your hopes for the Earth?: In the next round, ask the participants "what are your hopes for the earth?" This may seem like a simple question but is extremely difficult to answer. You can suggest that they can use their imagination, their workspace or their "dome" to try imagine the answer. Also this question does not necessarily apply to the future but can also be visualised in present. If they are finding it difficult to connect with this question or visualise their pictures, then suggest another question. "What are you hopes for this place/town/city/land". You can give the group at least five minutes to reflect on this question and then check with the group if more time is needed. Go further in explain to the group that they should use their imaginative space to visualise what it might look, feel and sound like and to describe some of the experiences and feelings they have.

Before the participants share their pictures, remind them about active listening - to try stay with the

person, to use their workspace to try seeing the other person's picture and to try not judge or respond to what they are saying. In addition, the participants should try listen to not just the content of what the person is saying, but also to the feeling, and the impulse from where the person is coming from.

STAGE 8: Developing the second question: A variety of questions can be developed and asked in this round, taking the group on constructive creative exchange building on the first two rounds. A suggested question is:

“ In what way do your hopes for the Earth link to anything you are doing or would like to do”

or you can ask

“ Considering your hopes, and the substance that has been gathered so far, what would you consider to be progress towards your hopes?”

We spend a great deal of time rushing into 'doing stuff', we are constantly thinking about what we should do, and how we should do it, but how often do we give ourselves the time to think about how our 'doings' link to what we value being. The first two stages encourage participants to experience being on/in the Earth. It provides the space and time for each participant to slow down and consider what they value being, and what they value about the place and world they are in, linking this to actual opportunities for action can be very productive and useful.

STAGE 9: Working with the materials: In this round, there is space to share a thought or question for the future. With the great deal of material and substance that the group has produced through the process, the participants can draw from this and try to clarify a clear question or aspiration for future Earth Forums. The question could also be taken and considered by each participant to apply in their daily lives. This round is available for an open exchange, but unlike most discussions, debates or conversations, every participant has developed their capacity to imagine and listen and so the exchange is a thoughtful, sincere and empathetic experience.

ETHICS

Earth Forum is a collaborative practice with the primary goal of equitable sharing of responsibilities and shared ecological citizenship. It is important to ensure Earth Forums have built in them a standardised core set of ethics and moral practices, such as informed and collaborative consent in all activities. This means that all participants, (children and their guardians as well as adults) need to be carefully consulted and made aware of the Earth Forum non-extractive process. This means you cannot use any content emergent from the Earth Forum without the informed consent of the other participants involved in the practice. This informed consent does not necessarily need to be in written form. For the Earth Forums in Africa we have found that there is a history in South Africa and in Africa of indigenous people's signing away their land, and so in our experience we have

found that people are sometimes reluctant to sign waivers or consent forms (McGarry & Shackleton, 2009 a)¹. It is therefore important to create ways of receiving consent that do not necessarily require a written signature, but can include verbal agreements as done by McGarry & Shackleton (2009 a) work with vulnerable rural children². In this case conversations discussing the aims, objectives and outcomes of how you will use the content emerging from the Earth Forum, including all perceived possible pros and cons are provided, for the participants.

As this is a deeply democratic and collaborative initiative there will sometimes be circumstances that require a more collaborative ethical strategy. Therefore participants need to decide if and in what way they would like to participate and what happens with materials that are produced together. This form of ethics has been drawn from *Grounded Collaborative Reciprocal Empowerment* developed by Piquemal and Allen (2009)³. Therefore ethical engagement becomes a shared responsibility and shared authority. Earth Forum does not see the participants as vulnerable subjects as this takes away their own voices their right to self-determination, but rather sees informed consent being developed through a process that is constantly negotiated by all those involved in the practice as it evolves. See more in Appendix 1 for documentation of Earth Forums.

APPENDIX 1: DOCUMENTING EARTH FORUMS

It is not advised to record Earth Forums as in many ways they exist in a particular time and place, and what should remain of them is left in the oiled fibres of the cloth. However sometimes with certain groups, they might want to have a record of the exchange, and this is fine as long as everyone in the group is comfortable with being recorded. The best photographic method for documenting is to photograph the Earth Forum cloth before it is used, and then again after each Earth Forum you conduct. You can place the cloth on the group where the Earth Forum was being held and step half a metre away from the cloth and take a photograph from shoulder height. This should ensure a consistent set of images. Make sure you (The responsible participant) takes the photo each time and not anyone else. In this way you will be able to gather a series of images of the cloth holding new traces of earth after each practice, and witness its growth and aging. You can email these images to Dylan McGarry at armadylan@gmail.com to have these added to the Earth Forum website www.earthfora.org on which citizens can follow the growing traces on

¹ a) McGarry, D. & C.M. Shackleton. (2009). Is HIV/AIDS jeopardising biodiversity? *Environmental Conservation*. 36 (1): 1-3.

² b) McGarry, D. & C.M. Shackleton. (2009). Children navigating rural poverty: Rural children's use of wild resources to counteract food insecurity in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. *Journal of Children and Poverty* 15 (1): 19-37

³ Piquemal, N.A.C. and N. Allen. (2009) Whose Story is it Anyway? Chapter 9 in Kouritzin, Sandra G., Natalie A.C. Piquemal, Renee Norman. (2009). *Qualitative Research: Challenging the Orthodoxies in standard academic discourse(s)*. Routledge. New York.

different cloths in different regions. If you feel you would like photographs of the entire group, make sure you have informed consent from each participant.

APPENDIX 2: THE APPRENTICESHIP

Being a responsible participant is being an empathetic and considerate participant, who through experience is able to guide Earth Forum. If you are willing to practice Earth Forums in your community and in your life, we suggest that you participate in at least five earth forums, guided by a responsible participant who has taken you on as an apprentice. Once you are feeling comfortable with the practice, working with the instruments and familiar with the particularities of being a responsible participant, you can use this handbook to help guide and remind you of the basic and finer details of this process. Once you are comfortable with the process; have completed a few Earth Forums; and received feedback from participants about your work as a responsible participant - you could begin working with other participants and train them as apprentices through the same process. It would also be useful to run an Earth Forum periodically with other responsible participants and get feedback from each other's experience to help improve your work.

APPENDIX 3: HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN EARTH FORUM CLOTH

If you would like to make your own cloth rather than order one, here are some simple instructions for how to do so:

1. Buy plain unbleached 100% natural calico cloth. This cloth is very common and most fabric stores will supply it. In order to tailor a two meter diameter circle, cut a length of at least 3 m and a width of 1.5 m to 2 m.
2. Take a piece of coloured chalk and a string, tie one end of the string to the chalk and measure out 1 m of string from the chalk to the approximate centre of the cloth (this is the radius of the circle) . This is a suggested size as anything bigger will be too cumbersome.
3. Tie a knot at the loose end of the string and pin this end of the 1m string to the centre and then use the string and chalk like a compass to draw out a perfect circle.
4. Cut along the chalk circle you have drawn.
5. Stitch a cm wide hem around the edge of the circle to avoid fraying.
6. Wash the cloth in hot water to remove the residue starch from the manufacturing process still left in the cloth. Allow to dry.
7. To oil the cloth, place half a cup of oil in a large pot, fill the rest of the pot with water and bring to a boil, once boiling place the cloth in the pot and stir for about 5 minutes. (grape-seed oil works well otherwise use regular sunflower oil).
8. Wash the cloth again in warm water (about 40°C) to remove the surface oil. Allow to dry.

NOTES

