

H4 Gunpowder – a recipe for disaster!

(if you don't follow the instructions properly)

Read the information carefully before you try the activity sheet

To make gunpowder, or black powder as it is also called, you need –

seventy-five parts saltpetre finely ground, fifteen parts charcoal and ten parts sulphur. All ingredients must be fine ground separately. This can be done by hand using a pestle and mortar. Never mix all three ingredients before grinding unless you want to turn your mortar into a canon and blow your hand off!



Once ground, the ingredients can be mixed with a small amount of water so that the mixture comes out as a paste, like biscuit dough. Stale urine can also be used as it improves the performance of the gunpowder. Then spread the paste onto a sheet of foil and let it dry for 2 to 3 days until it is a thin hard cake. Grind it up once again into the finest powder to make your “proper, fast burning gunpowder”.

When making your gunpowder never add any other ingredients or explosive powders unless you want to turn your gun into a grenade that can kill you or cripple you for life. Keep the black powder stored in steel, airtight tins in a cool, dry place, out of the reach of children.



ACTIVITY SHEET

A. Read the information about how to make gunpowder. On the lines below list the three ingredients against their correct proportions.

1. _____ 75%
2. _____ 15%
3. _____ 10%

= 100% or 100 parts

B. Just like making a cake, gunpowder has ingredients and a method by which it has to be made. If you don't follow the 'recipe' correctly you won't end up with "proper, fast-burning gunpowder". To make it easier to see what has to be done and in what order, write out the method to be followed, with each stage of the process being written on a new line. The first one has been done to help you.

1. Grind each of the ingredients separately in a pestle and mortar.

2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Making gunpowder can be **very dangerous**.

On the information sheet are three instructions to ensure your safety.

Choose two of them.

In each box draw a picture of what might happen if you do not follow the safety instructions.

Write what you should or should not do on the line under your picture.

NEVER	ALWAYS
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