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HANDS ON HISTORY THE ANCIENTS

The famous ancient stone circle at Stonehenge was built around 2500BC. But there are many more all across Britain. This pack will help you build your own mini-stone circle.

Key to icons



Estimated time



Indoors

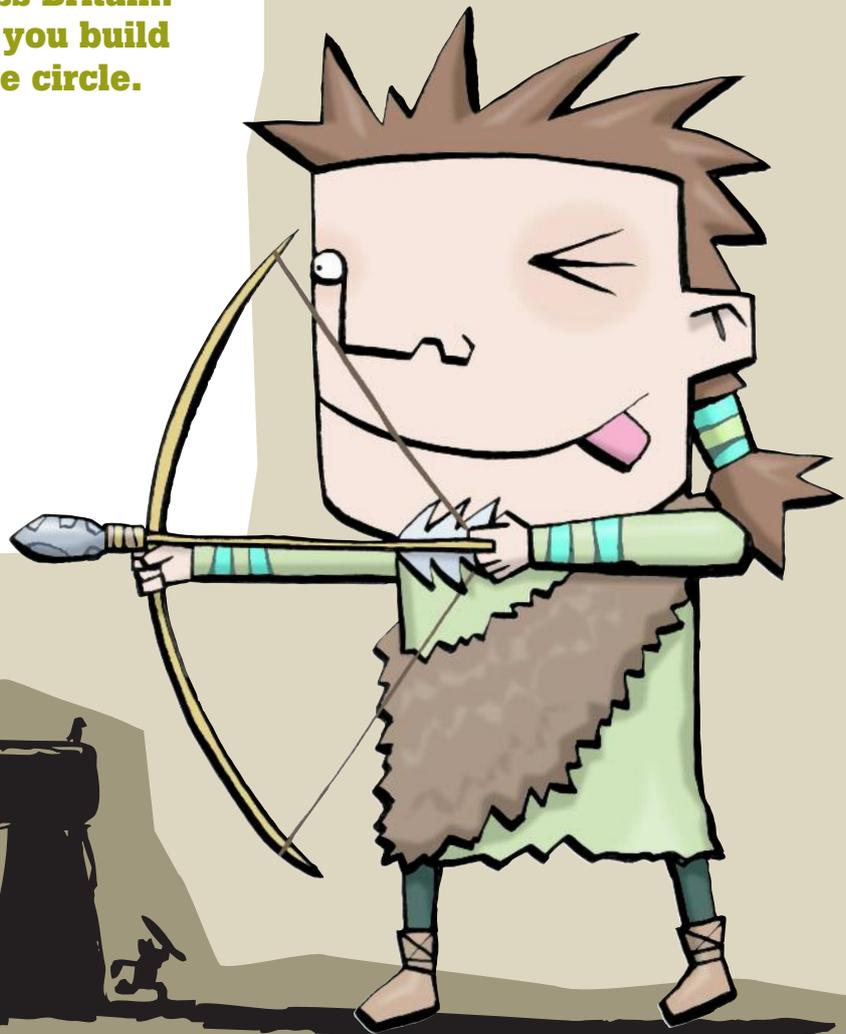


Outdoors



Completion

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BUILD A STONE CIRCLE

You will need:

- A sand tray
- Clean sand from a craft or toy shop
- Quick-drying modelling clay or a selection of suitably sized stones
- One torch and the ability to black out a room

1. Plan your stone circle

Decide what kind of stone circle you want to build.

It could be:

- A simple circle of upright stones like the Nine Maidens of Boskednan – this is now just nine standing stones, but was originally 22
- A larger arrangement with more than one circle and more stones lining pathways, like Stanton Drew
- A circle of stacked stones to create arches like Stonehenge, with more stones arranged inside the circle

You'll find diagrams of all three stone circles mentioned above in this pack. Or use the blank Planning Sheet to plan your own.



Top tips

A cat litter tray (unused!) or seed tray with the drainage holes covered make an ideal sand tray.

If you are using real stones, ensure they are cleaned and rinsed thoroughly before use.

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2. Get the stones ready

Work out how many and what sort of stones you will need for your circle. Around 10–25 stones per circle works well. Remember that about a quarter of each stone will be underground to ensure it stands up.

Stones: If you are using real stones, think about the colour, texture, shape and size, as they did in prehistoric times.

Clay: If you are modelling your stones, make them as realistic as possible by modelling them with rough edges. You may want to find some real stones to use as inspiration.

3. Start building!

Put your plans into action by building your stone circle in your sand tray.

Experiment, just as the ancients did, with how deeply you need to bury the bottom of your stones to keep them standing firmly upright.

You might need to add more sand at this stage to make sure that it is deep enough to put your stones into. Adding a little water to dampen the sand will help.

Modelling challenge!

If you are making your stones out of clay, make arches like the ones at Stonehenge by stacking one stone onto two standing stones beneath. Build the arch while the clay is damp and leave to dry so they stick together.

If you are using real stones, you could use strong sticky tack or tape to stick the top stone to the standing stones.



4. Bring the stones to life!

Think about what your stone circle would have been used for in the ancient world. Some ideas historians have had are:

- To measure the movement of the sun and moon
- To create a special meeting place
- For spiritual worship

Think of a name for your stone circle – it could be named after where you live, what you think people would use your circle for or what it looks like. For example, it might be called 'The Moon Worship Circle'.

5. Experiment with your circle

Think about how it would have felt for ancient people visiting your circle. Some historians believe they would have visited during the changing of the season, or at night. Many think that ancient people were interested in how the light from the sun and moon shone on the circle and created shadows.

You can test the light on your own circle. Find a dark room – you may want to turn out the lights and close the curtains in your bedroom. Use a torch to represent the sun or the moon.

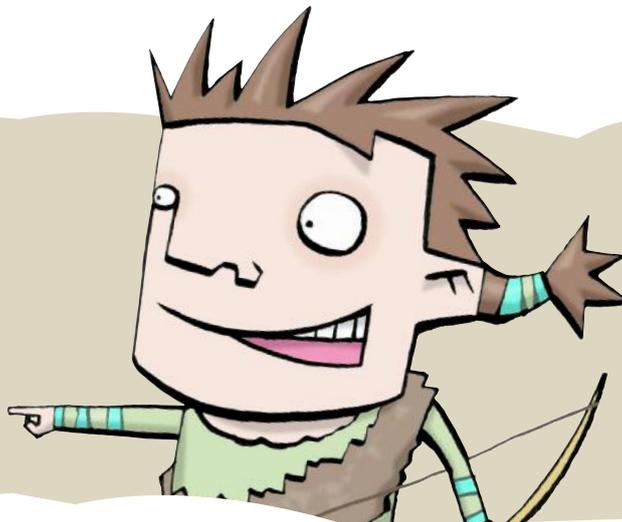
Start the light low down and let it rise over your model – how does it look? The sun and moon rise in the East so decide which side of your model is facing East by using a compass or choosing a direction yourself.

As you move the torch up and around your circle, think about which stones will be warmed first by the sun or lit by the silver light of the moon. What shadows are cast at each stage as the light climbs into the sky and then sets on the other side?

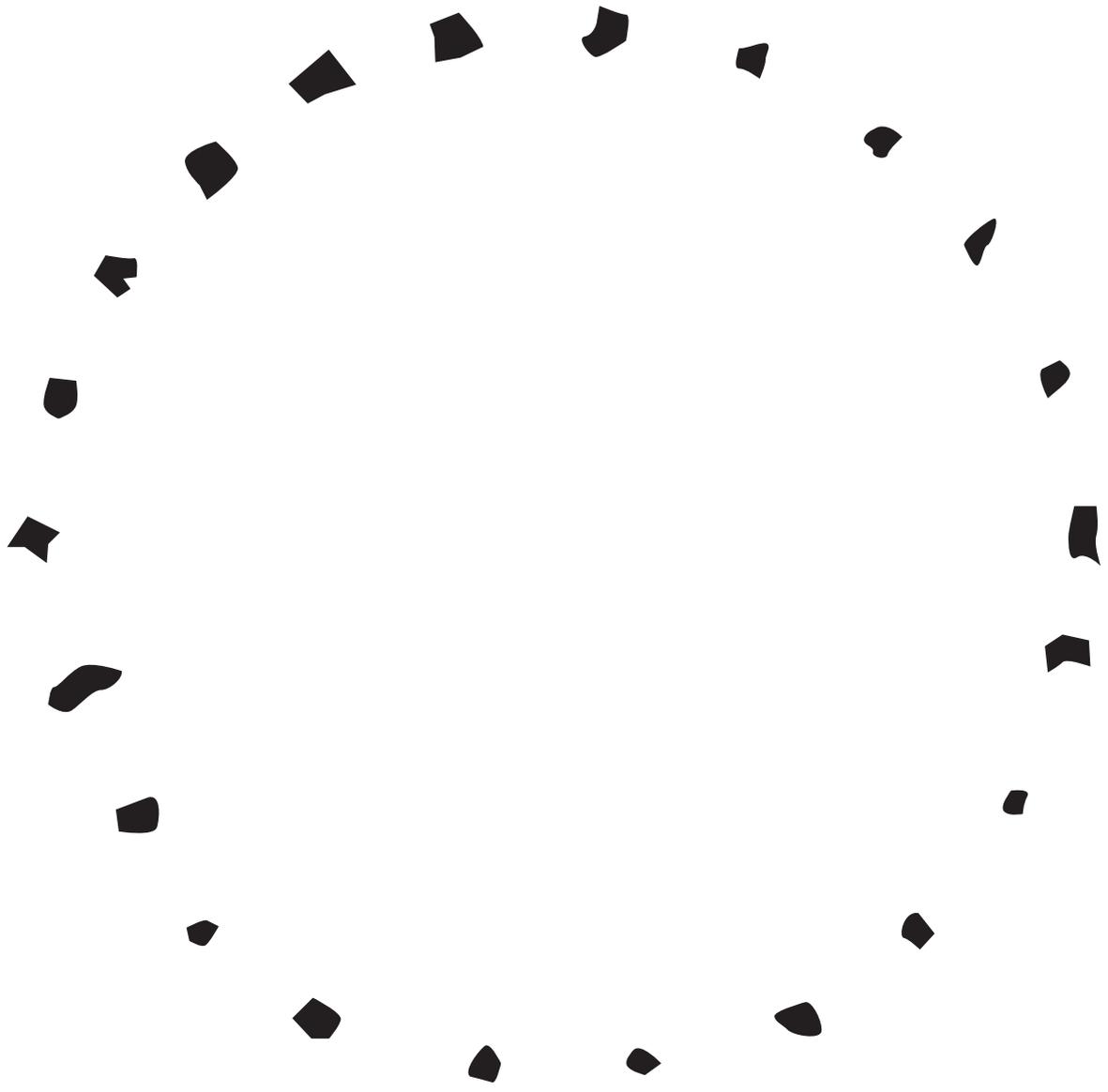
If you can, take your stone circles outside on a starry night, get down low and look through the stones to the sky above.



You are an ancient stone circle builder!



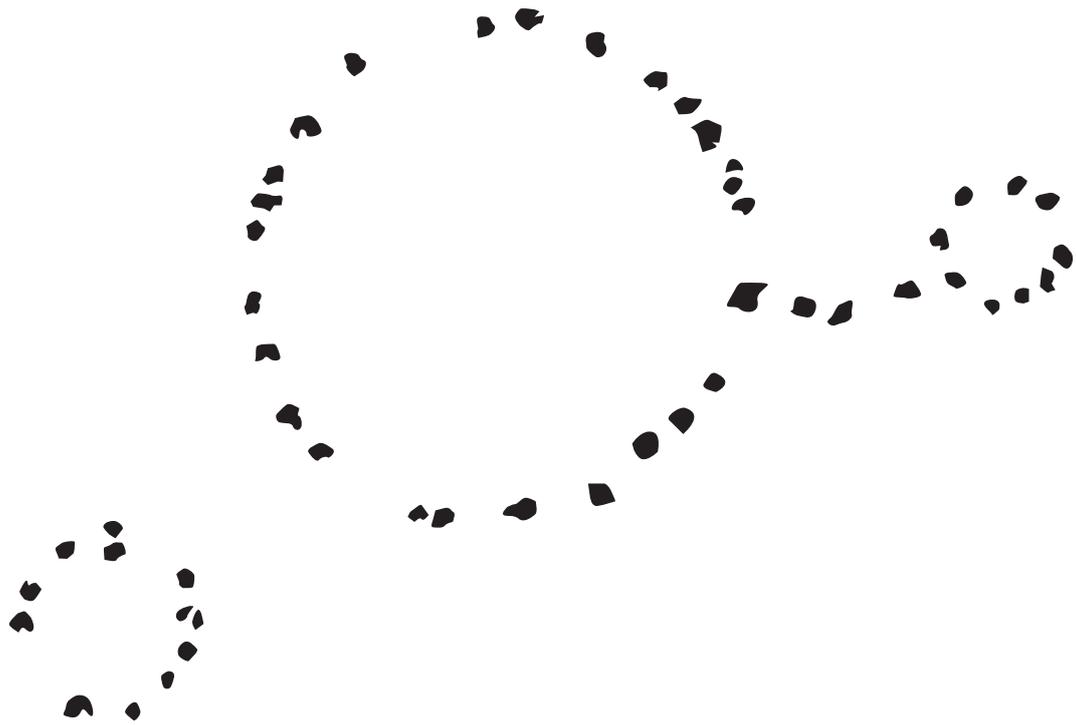
Nine Maidens of Boskednan



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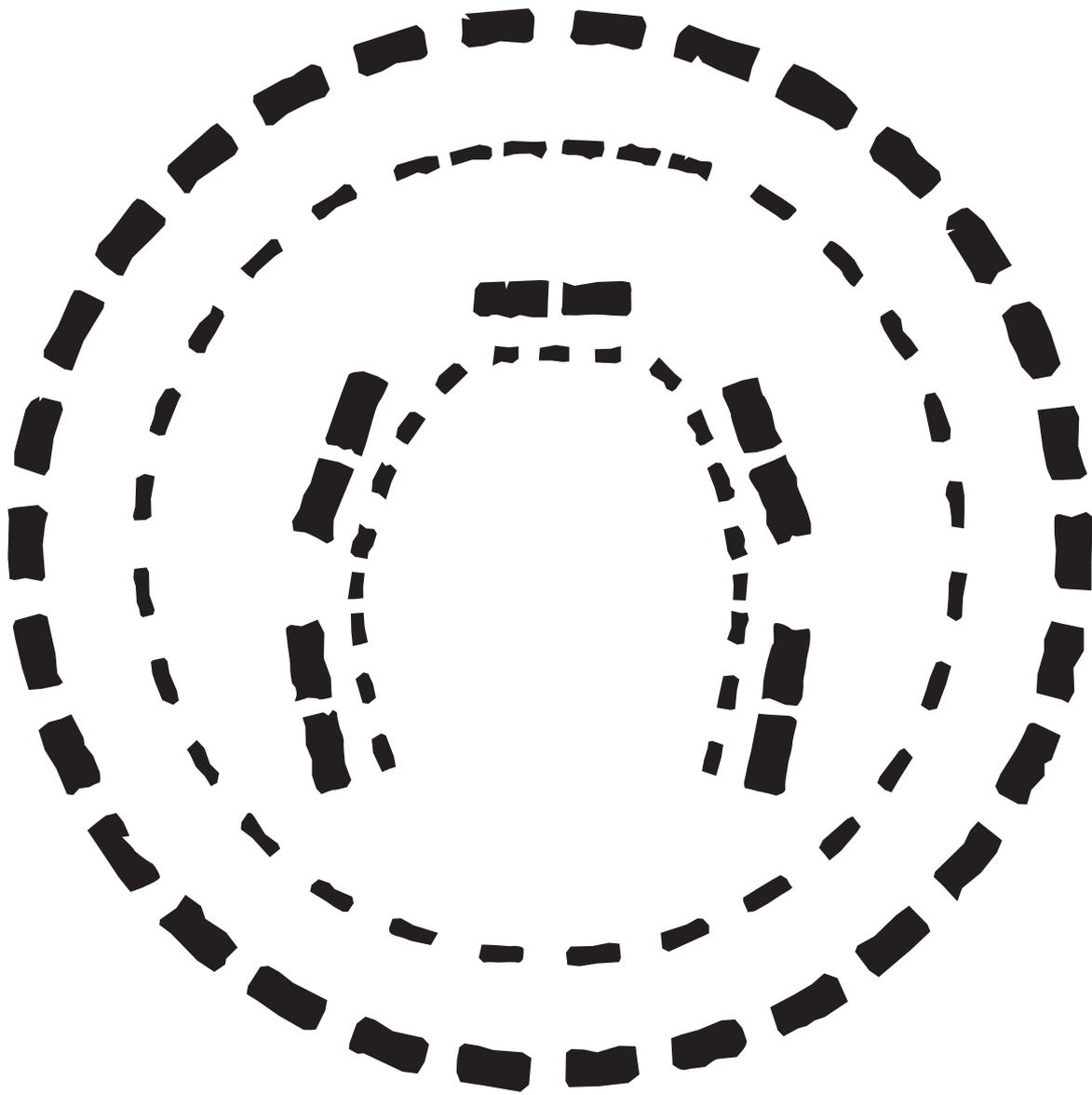
Stanton Drew



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Stonehenge



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STONE CIRCLE BUILDER'S PLANNING SHEET

Your plan: