

# THE BONE ROOM

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## Prepping individual skulls and bones using maceration

**Before you begin:** These instructions are provided as a service to customers who would like to prepare their own bone specimens. Before doing so, please be aware that many localities have laws protecting native species. These laws may apply to found remains as well as to the live animal. Please check your local laws before proceeding.

**What is maceration?** Using bacterial action in water to clean bone is called maceration. This is the simplest method for cleaning bone and works best for large sturdy bones, for example mammal skulls and long bones. It is not recommended for very delicate bones such as those found in birds or reptiles, or for skeletons you would like to keep together (articulated). ALL of the bones will separate, as maceration removes the connective tissue that keeps the skeleton together.

**Step 1:** Remove any remaining tissue or hide to the best of your ability. This will make the maceration go faster.

**Step 2:** Fully immerse the bone in a container of plain water.

**Step 3:** Leave the container in a warm location where you won't mind the smell.

**Step 4:** Periodically pour the greasy, smelly water out (gardens love it!) and top off with fresh water.

**Step 5:** When the water remains clear, the bacteria have finished breaking down any remaining tissue.

**Step 6:** If you wish to whiten or sterilize the bones, transfer them into a container of hydrogen peroxide (drug-store strength is fine). Remove them when they have reached the shade of white you desire.

**NEVER USE BLEACH.** Chlorine-based bleaches will degrade bone. The chlorine remains behind and continues to eat away at the bone, eventually reducing it to a white powder. Hydrogen Peroxide is a safer alternative.

**Step 7:** Some teeth may have fallen out during the maceration process. Once the skull is clean and dry, you can glue these back into place using a simple white glue (also called PVA glues) such as Weldbond or Elmer's.

**You're Done!**