

# Make Your Own Scribe's Equipment



You will need:

**A:** The pack and inner tube from a roll of kitchen foil (and the inner tube from a kitchen towel roll if you also want to make a document case)

**B:** A long cord or bootlace

**C:** A length of thin cord or string

**D:** Gummed paper tape (you might also need parcel tape/ Scotch tape/ glue)

**E:** A square of felt or leatherette fabric

**F:** The outer packs from two tubes – e.g. toothpaste – one which fits inside the other

**G:** Paint discs from a children's paint box, with the brush to act as a pen

**H:** a small bowl

You will also need and some form of adhesive (I used double-sided sticky tape and glue dots to save mess), scissors, a ruler, a pencil or fine felt tip pen and a blunt-ended sewing needle with a large eye (the sort used for sewing up knitting).



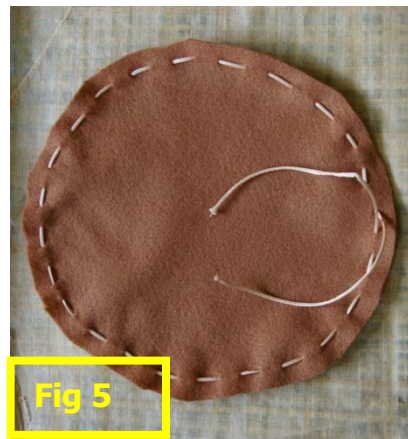
**To make the palette:** Place box **A** with one of the wider sides uppermost and the opened end at the bottom. Use a pen and ruler to draw the pen slot (this should occupy the middle third of the length of the box). Place box **B** beside box **A** so that the closed end is just a bit higher than the top of the marked pen slot. Draw a line around box **B** level with the bottom of box **A**. (see figure 2).

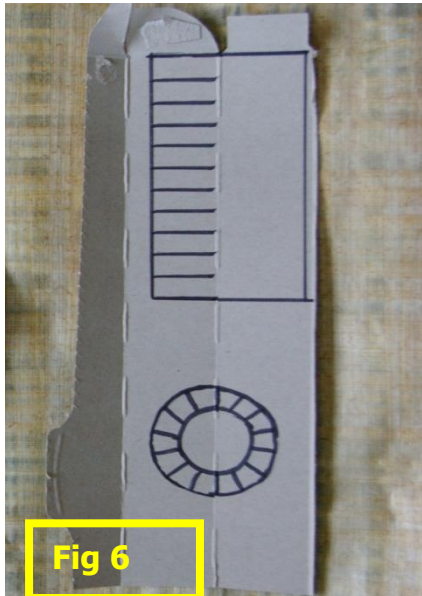
Cut along the three lines on box **A** so that the sloping part of the pen slot can be pushed in. Remove the bottom of box **B** by cutting around the line. Slide box **B** inside box **A** until the ends are level. Fix box **B** to the bottom of box **A** with a piece of double-sided sticky tape or a dab of glue. Put another glue dot or strip of sticky tape on the underside of the short edge of the pen slot and press this down to fix it on to box **B**. Glue or tape closed the end of Box **A**.

Use gummed brown paper tape to cover the whole palette to make it look like wood. A loop made from card cut from box B can be stuck to the back of the palette (figure 3).

Use glue dots, sticky tape or Blutak to stick two paint discs in place at the top of the palette (figure 4). Traditionally these should be black and red but Egyptian artists used palettes with many colours so make your own choice. The pen (or paintbrush) is stored in the slot.

**To make the bag:** Cut as large a circle as possible from the piece of felt. Using the needle, make holes all around the circle about 1cm apart and about 1cm in from the edge. Thread the cord or string through the holes (figure 5) and gather up the felt to make a drawstring pouch. An Egyptian scribe would use this bag for keeping spare ink blocks, a knife for sharpening pens and his water bowl, (item **H** in figure 1).

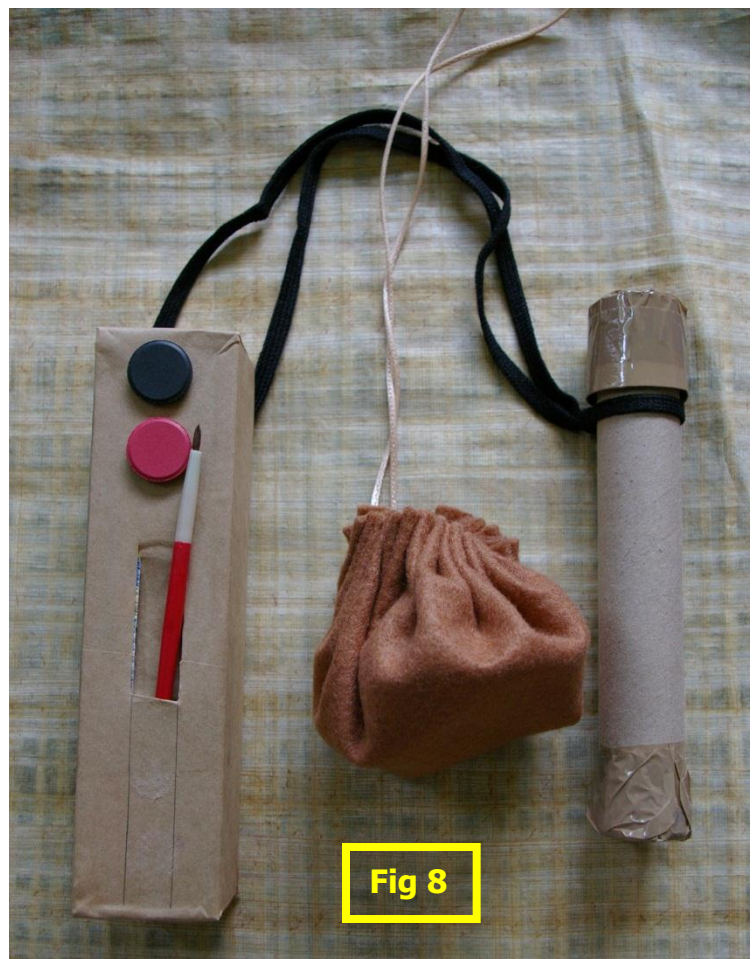




### To make the pen-case:

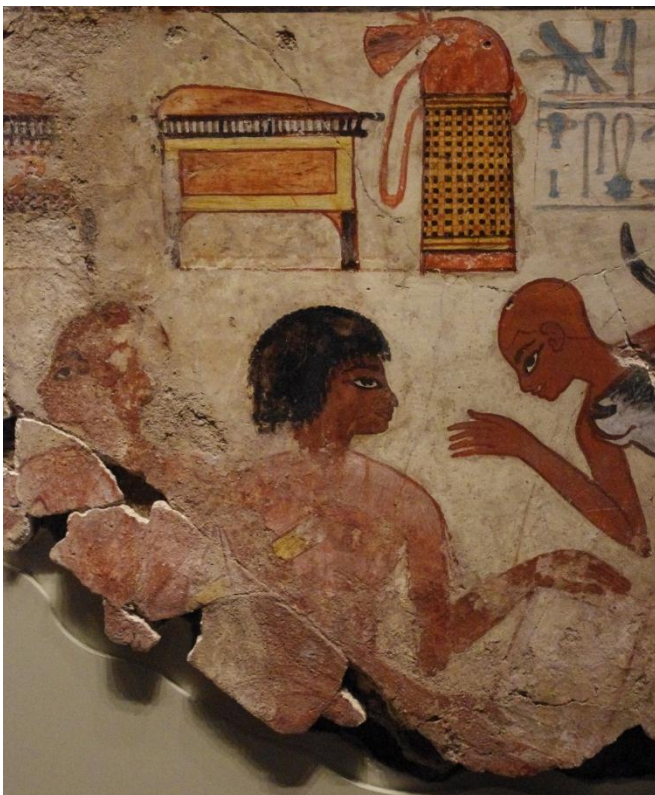
Cut a section of tube **T** which is a bit longer than the paintbrushes you want to keep in it. (The cardboard of this tube is likely to be quite thick so using scissors will be very hard. Ask an adult to cut it with a serrated blade such as a bread knife.) For the base and lid, use card from the packet **C**, as in figure 6. For the base, draw round the end of the tube and draw another circle about .1cm out from the first. On the same card, mark out a strip for the lid. This should be long enough to wrap around the top of the tube with a small overlap and still be quite a loose fit, using the already folded and scored edge of packet **C** as a guide. Cut out these two pieces and snip down the lines as shown in figure 6 to form a series of tabs. For the base, fold down the tabs all around the circle (unprinted side outwards).

Stand the tube in the base and fix them together using glue or double-sided tape. To make the base stronger, cover it all with parcel tape. To make the lid, form the strip into a cylinder which fits loosely over the tube. Fold down the tabs like the spokes of a wheel and fix them in place before covering with parcel tape. From the felt left over from making the bag, cut a narrow strip to stick around the outside of the open end of the pen-case. This will ensure a good fit and will stop the lid falling off, (figure 7). Make a slip knot in the middle of one of the shoelaces and tighten this around the neck of the pen-case, just below the lid. Tie the loose ends of the shoe lace together through the loop on the back of the palette.



I have left my palette and pen-case undecorated, (figure 8,) but you might like to write your own name in hieroglyphs on the front of the palette and either paint the pen-case or cover it in coloured paper. One of the pen-cases from Tutankhamen's tomb is decorated in gold leaf and glass inlay to look like an elaborate column. If you want to use the palette, remember that too much water will make the cardboard soggy so try not to get the paints too wet. When you look at Egyptian palettes in a museum notice how often the black and red pigments have stained the wood all around the ink holes.

The Egyptian scribe would carry his equipment over his shoulder with the palette hanging at the front and the pen-case and bag behind, as you can see on many scribe statues and images such as the wooden panels from the Third Dynasty tomb of Hesyre. These three items tied together were so typical of the scribe's job that they became the hieroglyph for 'scribe' or anything to do with writing.



The scribe might also have a document case in which he kept papyrus scrolls. You can make a document case in the same way as the pen-case but using a tube with a bigger diameter, such as one from a roll of kitchen towel, (figure 9). I covered mine in brick-wall paper, of the sort used for a doll house, like the document case shown in ← this painting from the British Museum. The papyrus kept inside the case would be rolled and secured with a cord.