

## How Did Ancient Egyptians Make Mummies?

By Cindy Grigg

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You may have seen mummies in scary movies or as Halloween decorations. Mummies can't walk around and scare people like they do in movies. But mummies are real. In ancient Egypt, great care was taken with a dead body to make a mummy. How did they make mummies?

The mummification process took seventy days to make a mummy. First, the internal organs were removed. An iron hook was passed through the nose into the brain. The brain was thought to be of little use. After it was drained out through the nose, it was thrown away. The belly was cut open. The lungs, stomach, liver, and intestines were taken out. Sometimes, these internal organs were thrown into the river or buried. For important mummies, though, the organs were placed in special jars called canopic jars. The jars were kept near the mummy in the tomb. The heart was thought to be the seat of the soul. It was left inside the body. It would be weighed in the afterlife against the Feather of Truth.

Then the body was washed and filled with herbs and spices. The cut in the belly was sewn shut. Natron, a type of salt, was used to dry it out. The salt absorbed all the fluids from the body. After forty days packed in natron, the skin dried and looked like leather. It was then rubbed with oil. The body cavity was stuffed with sawdust or linen to give it a lifelike shape. Resin or tree sap was melted and poured into the skull. Sometimes the nose and mouth were sealed with beeswax. Then the body was carefully wrapped with strips of linen. Linen is a cloth made from the flax plant. Amulets, or magical charms, were put inside the wrappings. Resin covered the outer layer of wrapping. A mask was placed over the head.

Fine oils were used to scent the finished mummies of important people. Pharaohs were given masks of solid gold. Mummies were placed in coffins. A simple burial might have the mummy placed inside one coffin. Royal burials had several decorated coffins, one inside another. Once the mummy was placed in its coffins, it was ready to be taken to its tomb. Coffins were then placed inside a stone sarcophagus. The tomb was filled with everything the dead person might need in the afterlife.



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### Questions

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1. How long did it take to make a mummy?

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2. What was done with the lungs, stomach, liver, and intestines of "important" mummies?

- A. They were thrown into the river.
- B. They were weighed in the afterlife against the Feather of Truth.
- C. They were placed in special jars and kept in the tomb near the mummy.
- D. none of the above

Name \_\_\_\_\_



Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Was the heart or the brain thought to be more important in the afterlife?

- A. brain
- B. heart

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_ was a type of salt that was used to dry out the body.

- A. Amulet
- B. Resin
- C. Natron
- D. Canopic

5. What is linen made from?

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\_\_\_\_\_ 6. What caused the body to dry out?

- A. The salt (natron) absorbed all the fluids from the body.
- B. Resin covered the outer layer of wrapping, and this caused the body to dry out.
- C. The body cavity was stuffed with sawdust or linen.
- D. The desert heat caused the body to dry out.

**Write a story about a mummy.**

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