

Ancient Egypt - Handling Objects



This is half of a pair of **cymbals** that you could clink together when you dance. They are made from bronze, which is a mixture of tin and copper.

Egyptians were very skilled at metalworking and used bronze a lot because it's harder than pure copper.



This is a **statuette** of an Egyptian god called Bez.

He is an ugly dwarf and he protects the house and children from evil spirits.

He has a wife, called Tawaret who is a hippopotamus with the legs of a lion. (Heaven knows what their children looked like!)



Do you have something in your house that you believe brings you good luck or protects you from evil spirits? Do you ever cross your fingers for good luck when the lottery numbers are being picked? If you went into a house in Birmingham you might see statues of gods or horseshoes over the door to bring good luck. The people who lived in the house that we are in believed in many different gods. One of the most powerful of these gods had a man's body and a hawk's head and was called 'Horus'. If you look at the eye of a hawk, you can see that it is the same shape as this **lucky charm**.



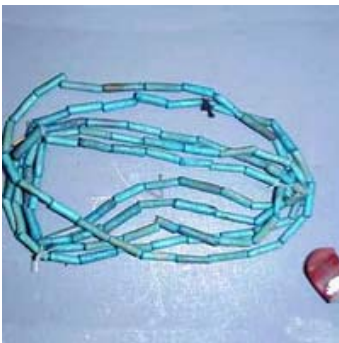
This is a **headrest** - a type of Egyptian pillow. You slept on it lying on your side so that it propped up your head and kept your neck straight and comfortable. This one is made out of a soft kind of wood called cedar so it would be easy to shape. It's made in three parts so that the middle part can be longer or shorter, depending on how big you were. It doesn't look very comfortable because the padding is missing from the part that touches your head. Some were plain and some were beautifully carved. Headrests were also used to support the heads of the dead to keep evil spirits from entering



This **knife blade** is made from flint and sometimes these knives had wooden handles. Knives like this were often used to cut papyrus into strips so that you could make paper. Flint is very hard, and you can chip away at the edge of it to get a cutting edge. Egyptians used flint to make the sharp edges on the blades of their scythes. They used scythes for cutting down wheat which they grew on the flood plains of the Nile.



The **mirror** is made out of a metal called bronze which is a mixture of copper and tin. You melt the two metals in a pot and mix them together. The scientific name for a mixture of metals is 'alloy'. When you mix two metals together like this, the new metal will have different qualities from the metals that you started off with. Bronze is harder than pure tin or pure copper would be. The mirror was made by beating a lump of bronze until it was as thin as a sheet of cardboard. Then it was polished to make it shiny enough to reflect the light back from your face. Sometimes these mirrors had handles made out of bone or ivory.



This **necklace** is made from pottery beads called 'faience'. Specialist necklace makers threaded complicated bead collars. Finer work was worn by royals and richer nobles. Poorer classes wore faience and animal bone necklaces...



The little **jar** is made out of Alabaster and was used to hold kohl. Kohl is a black makeup that the Egyptians used to decorate their eyes. If you look closely at the lid, you can see that there is a small bump that fits into the neck of the jar to stop the air getting in. The Egyptians decorated their eyes not just to make them look attractive but also to protect them from the glare of the sun and to keep flies away. The style of eye make up most popular looked liked the 'Eye of Horus'. You can see what that looked like by finding the Eye of Horus charm, which is somewhere else in this room.



The people in this house liked to amuse themselves by playing a board game called '**Senet**'

This is a **counter** from the game. It's about 3cm high.

If you come to our museum, you can try out the game in the Egypt Gallery.....



If you lived in this house, you might have put Lotus flowers in your **vase** and possibly papyrus stems to make a pleasing decoration. It's made of Alabaster, which is a type of soft marble that's easy to carve. Light will shine through it, so you could also put a candle inside it and use it as a lamp. (The scientific word for 'allows light to pass through' is translucent.)