

How to Make a Roman Wax Tabula

To commemorate Sts. Zechariah & Elizabeth on September 5th, consider making a real Roman Wax Tabula similar to the one St. Zechariah may have used to write “His name is John.” In Luke 1:57-80, we read of Zechariah’s naming of St. John the Baptist. “And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And they all wondered. And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God.” A tabula, Latin for tablet, would likely have been made with a wood frame and filled with beeswax on which one would write with a stylus made of wood or bone.

To make one Roman Wax Tabula, you will need:

- A piece of soft wood (The dimensions are not particularly important and can be adjusted based on what piece of wood you have available. The tabula in this tutorial is 9 inches by 7 inches.)
- Wood chiseling tools
- Beeswax pellets
- Coconut oil
- An old pot
- An exacto knife
- A cuticle stick (This will be your stylus.)



Start by cutting your wood to the size you would like your tablet. Then mark a rectangle one inch from the edge of your wood piece.

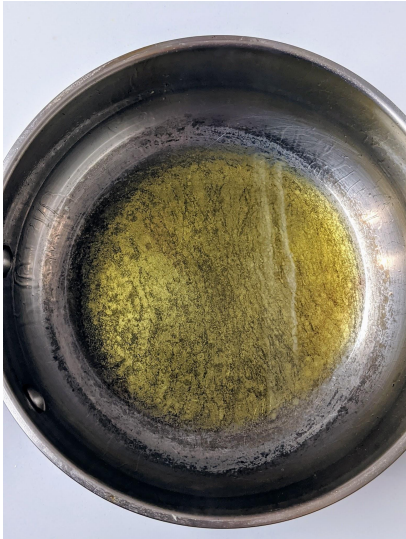


Using wood chiseling tools, carve out the inside rectangle to about $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch deep.

Optional: If you are unable to carve your own wood frame, you can instead use an old wooden puzzle frame that has had all the puzzle pieces removed.



Put 4 tablespoons of beeswax pellets and 1 tablespoon of coconut oil into an old pan.



Heat over medium heat until completely melted.



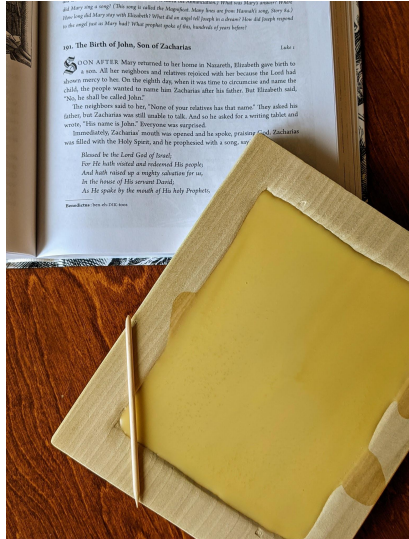
Pour the melted beeswax and coconut oil mixture into the center rectangle of the wood frame.



Allow to set and cool completely.



Using an exacto knife or something similar, scrape off any beeswax that may have poured out of the center rectangle.



Using a cuticle stick as a stylus, carve "His name is John." or whatever else you may like to write.



You can push on the carved letters with your fingers to erase them slightly. But once your tabula wax has been pretty much used up, scrape out the remaining beeswax and melt some more to fill and replace it!