

Make Your Own Ship's Biscuit!

Ever since Samuel Pepys introduced a standard daily amount of food in the Royal Navy back in the late 1600s, there has been a call for these biscuits. During the big naval battles of the 1800's Britain had 127 ships which meant they needed over 100,000 Sailors to run them. It was a difficult job to try and feed all of the men as they were given 5,000 calories a day (that's double the amount an adult male should have today)! What made it even more difficult is that food and drink would quickly go mouldy because of the damp places they were kept in on the ships. A really useful bit of food was 'Hard Tac' also known as 'Ship's Biscuit'. The word biscuit comes from the French term to 'bake twice'. These rather filling biscuits aren't like the ones you have today, they were plain and rock-solid! Even though they weren't very nice to eat, each man was given 1lb (450g) of them a day! Luckily for the ships cook, they were very easy to make, all you need is three ingredients!

Below is a recipe for your own ship's biscuit and on the next page is a pattern to help you get the right size (they are definitely not for eating!)

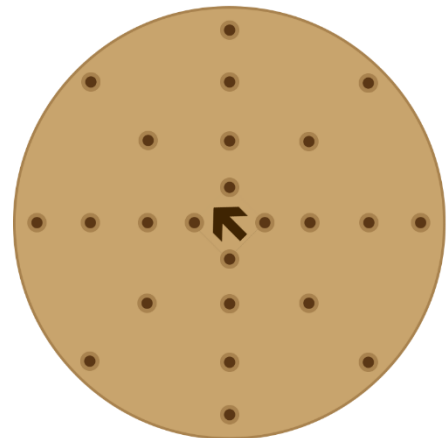
*You may need to ask an adult to help you with the cutting and the oven.

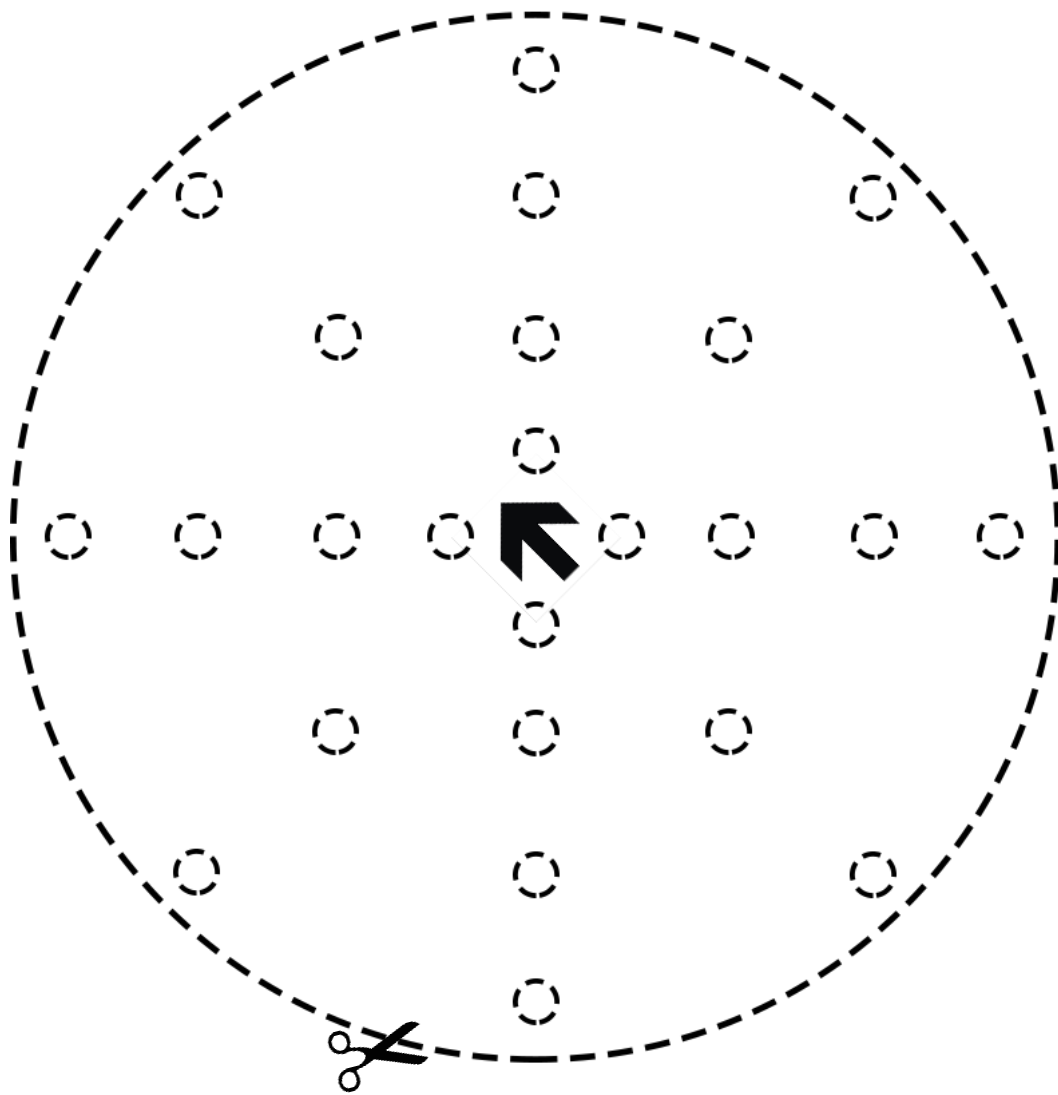
Ingredients

- Flour, 140g
- Water, 85ml
- Salt (a pinch)

Method

- Set the oven to around 150c
- Place the flour and salt into a bowl and mix together
- Slowly mix in the water to create a tough dough
- Put some flour on a rolling pin and on a worksurface. Roll out the dough to be around
- Carefully cut out the stencil below and place it on the dough. Cut around to create your biscuit shape
- Use something like a chopstick or a blunt pencil to poke holes into the dough where the smaller circles are on the stencil. Using a blunt knife or handle of a spoon create an arrow shape in the centre of the biscuit
- Ask your adult to move the dough onto a baking tray and place it in the oven for between 1-2 hours
- Ask your adult to take the hot biscuit out of the oven and leave to cool fully.





Pointing out the pointy thing...

In the centre of the ship's biscuit there is an arrow. This arrow has two names; *The Broad Arrow* or *The Crow's Foot*. The arrow marks whatever it is on as property of the Crown. These arrows can be found all over the place, such as: biscuits, guns, glass windows, bags of bread and even prisoner's uniforms!

Bonus Biscuit facts!

- The sailors in the British Royal Navy used to also call them 'teeth destroyers' because they were so hard.
- Some sailors smashed them up and mixed it in with their stew or rum.
- Due to the lack of food hygiene, bugs called 'weevils' used to grow in the biscuits. Sometimes they had so many weevils in them that the biscuit used to shake!
- To try and get rid of the weevils the sailors used to bang the biscuits on the tables or on their elbows. Some say that is why the British Sign Language sign for biscuit is miming hitting your elbow!
- One change that came about was the need for something nicer to go on the Officer's table. They were rolled out much thinner, and folded over and over again to create the Carr's Water Table Biscuits.

