Design & Technology Resources

The Gerbil

An Introduction to the Gerbil

1. The Gerbil

The Gerbil is a versatile work table, for use by students in the classroom, into which can be mounted a variety of tools for working on plastic, wood and metal. There are three models, the basic **2010**, fitted with a trimming disc, the **2020**, which has extra features such as a tilting table, extraction and a range of tools, and the **2030**, which features a 2020 model with a purpose-built trolley.

2010

2020

2030

2. Trimming out Vacuum Formings

A common application is for trimming out shapes formed by a vacuum from a sheet of plastic. The advantage of the Gerbil over other techniques, such as using a band saw or Stanley knife, is that the process is accurate, controllable, and above all safe.

The formings can be cut out using either a trimming disc or a flange cutter. The disc works from *inside* the forming and produces a straight edge. The flange cutter works from *outside* the forming and leaves a flanged edge. The flange may be appropriate, for example, if two pieces are to be joined together. Instructions for disc and flange trimming. See Resource Materials G2 and G3.

3. Sanding and Finishing

A drum sander or flap wheel can be fitted in place of a trimming tool. This can be used for finishing any rough edges left by the trimmer, for shaping profiles in the forming, or for working on the mould itself. When used with the adjustable tilting table, for example, you can produce a slanted or chamfered edge on the mould (often known as the "Draft Angle") which makes it easier to withdraw the mould from the forming. See Resource Material G4.

Similarly, a mini mop can be fitted for the polishing or finishing of pieces of acrylic. This is particularly useful for the finishing of small components, as this can be hazardous on a full size polisher.

4. Cutting Slots and Rebates

With the addition of the guide fences, the Gerbil's disc can be used to make slots and rebates in soft wood. This is ideal, for example, for making a lid for a box, or slots to divide a box into compartments. See Resource Material G5.