

Every grain of sand

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Monks from India's Drepung Monastery carefully apply grains of sand to a mandala they are creating in the Morial Convention Center in downtown New Orleans. The monks are in town as part of a [conference](#) hosted by the Tulane School of Social Work and in conjunction with the Dalai Lama's visit to the city.



A monk selects a metal funnel that he will use to apply colorful grains of sand to the mandala.



The monks remain focused on their work as a crowd of onlookers gathers around them.



A compass is employed to take a precise measurement. The sand mandala is part of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and has been called a "roadmap to enlightenment," as every color, dot and line represents a part of Buddhist philosophy. Each component must be placed in exactly the same place every time the mandala is constructed.