

BASIC METAL CLAY TOOLS AND SUPPLIES - STARTING OUT WITH METAL CLAY

If you're just getting started with metal clay, selection anxiety probably kicked in immediately you were faced with all of the available Metal Clay tools, clays, books, cutters and textures. Purchasing a basic "starter kit" rather than finding and purchasing the required materials, supplies and equipment separately often seems to be the most practical way forward. We have tried to address all options here.

For those who prefer a readymade beginner's tool option we recommend our METAL CLAY BEGINNERS STARTER TOOL and FINISHING KIT. Clay is **not** included in this kit and will need to be purchased separately. Other Starter Kits we offer contain a minimum of tools but the value of included clay makes them worth considering if you already own many or some of the tool listed below. Please visit the Tools and Kits category on our online shop www.metalclay.com.au to see all of the Kits available.

For those who prefer to make up their own metal clay kit, this is a recommended list of items that will give Metal Clay beginners a solid place to start and continue on with their metal clay adventure.

RECOMMENDED METAL CLAY EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION:

Please contact us on mail@metalclay.com.au for metal clay class recommendation. If possible, and there is someone available nearby, we will direct you to a metal clay teaching facility or to an experienced instructor who teaches metal clay in or close to your area.

If you are unable to find or attend a local class, we would recommend:

YouTube and Vimeo: Search for metal clay, precious metal clay, art clay beginners classes or tutorials. There are some excellent metal clay tutorials on YouTube and Vimeo that can be watched repeatedly and at your leisure.

Metal Clay Books: A wide variety of outstanding Metal Clay Books are available to purchase a refer to. Many have been written/demonstrated and narrated by talented, experienced metal clay artists from around the world. We recommend Book Depository who usually offer a good selection of metal clay books plus shipping is included in their quoted price. Not all bricks and mortar Book Stores offer a good range of Metal Clay Books but it may still be worth having a look. eBay and Amazon sell some Metal Clay books.

BASIC METAL CLAY TOOLS AND SUPPLIES LIST

TOOLS: Many of the items listed are available from our shop www.metalclay.com.au

Work surface or Underlay. Can be thick plastic, tempered glass, smooth ceramic tile, plain piece of acrylic or a self-healing cutting mat.

Plastic report cover – thick clear, not anti-glare or frosted. These are invaluable for covering clay when rolling out etc. Helps keep the clay drying out too quickly. Can be lightly lubricated with olive oil or "Silky Drop" which is our own very slick, non-sticky release agent

Teflon Sheet

Acrylic Clay Roller or any smooth surfaced roller

Spacers or Batts for rolling out different thicknesses of clay. We recommend and sell the Graduated Spacer Set of 6, and single spacers in our shop. You can also use regular playing card sticky taped or glued together

Craft Knife and Tissue Blade. For cutting and slicing clay – both are essential tools but beware they are sharp! A ceramic Clay Scraper is another very useful little tool.

Needle tool - A regular alloy handled Needle tool can be used to cut easily around and through clay. A regular sewing needle embedded into cork or polymer clay can also be used.

Water Container. A small solid bowl with some weight is useful. Anything too lightweight will get knocked over.

Small, Airtight Containers. Use for storing pre-made metal clay components (little balls and embellishments) or storing left over bits of dry clay for mixing slip.

Paintbrushes. A small pointed brush, a flat-edged brush, and a medium round brush. Brushes with built-in water reservoirs are also handy.

Needle files. Set of regular needle files and a set of mini diamond needle files.

Bead Reamer Set

Rubber Block. Excellent tool for supporting/bracing your work while you sand, polish or carve.

Spray or Spritzer Bottles. A water spray bottle is useful for rehydrating Metal Clay. A bottle of Silky Drop release agent or similar is recommended for misting your hands, tools, clay, work surface, etc.

Brass Brush – we recommend using a soft brass brush for silver clay

Stainless Steel Brush – long or short bristles for copper, bronze and steel, base metal clays

Burnisher – straight or curved

Tweezers - Fine, straight and bent-tipped tweezers (specifically made for picking up gemstones) and cross-lock tweezers.

Plastic wrap/sandwich wrap for keeping clay moist.

Drinking straws – collect as many sizes as you can for cutting holes in clay and forming bails.

Clay Shapers. Silicone-tipped Shapers with a variety of tips. Very useful.

Stainless steel Wax Sculpting and Clay Carving tools. Polymer Clay and Pottery modelling, sculpting tools work well. Many plastic cake decorating and sugar craft tools can be adapted for use with metal clay. Check through your cupboards and drawers!

Sandpapers (wet/dry charcoal type) in multiple grits - 400, 600, 800 and 1200

3m Soft Sanding Sponges – 3 grades – Green (finest) Blue (medium) and Red (coarse) essential for a good hand finish with metal clay. These are the best sanding options available for metal clay.

3m Polishing Paper Assortment – another recommended essential for best practise hand finish with metal clay All best practise metal clay finishing and sanding products are available at www.metalclay.com.au

Emery Boards or Nail Files in different grits, from coarse to fine. Useful for pre-finishing bone-dry, unfired clay.

Metal Palette knife is useful for mixing slip, reconstituting dried clay and mixing glycerine into clay to make it flexible, etc.

Acrylic Clay Snake Maker/Roller/work surface. Useful for making uniform rolls or snakes of clay

Pin Vice with swivel top wooden handle

Mini Twist Drills (Set of 6) – a set like this set will serve most purposes.

Textures and Moulds, the sky's the limit with metal clay. From leaves, bark, bottle caps, buttons, lace, textured wallpaper and fabric through to commercial texture mats/sheets or texture stamps. Make your own unique textures and moulds using cold mould putty or polymer clay. Draw on to Scratch Foam to create your own unique surface designs to impress into metal clay.

Quality Stamps. If you're going to sell any of your metal clay creations, you need to stamp or scribe them with the appropriate quality mark .999Fine Silver .925

Soft Dust Brush – Dust off your projects regularly when sanding, filing etc to reveal scratches, dents and imperfections that can be repaired before firing.

Magnifying Glass. Very useful and important tool! If you are satisfied with the finish on your unfired metal clay piece looking at it through a magnifying glass, you will be satisfied with the finish on your fired clay.

Cutters. Small Kemper Shape Cutter Sets. Makins Cutters, **cookie cutters of all shapes and sizes**

Pliers. Round nose, flat nose and chain nose.

Rawhide Mallet

Fibre Brick and/or Stainless Steel Net

www.metalclay.com.au

MATERIALS:

Metal CLAY of choice. Silver Metal Clay – PMC (PMC+ PMC3 PMC Flex PMC OneFire Sterling or PMC Sterling. Art Clay Silver of choice. For each clay selection you make, we recommend matching or adding the compatible clay type, paste, syringe and paper (if applicable) PMC Flex is the silver clay most recommended for beginners. PMC3 is the most popular and most widely used metal clay.

Copper Clay, Bronze Clay, and Steel Clay are amongst the best known base metal clays – **They should be kiln fired and embedded in activated carbon. Butane Torch and Stove Top firing are not recommended for base metal clays.**

Release agent: This prevents clay from sticking to your fingers, tools, cutters, work surfaces, moulds, texture sheets and other materials. Silky Drop release agent is recommended by us because it does not leave a sticky residue on your hands, tools, textures and moulds. Olive oil can be used - Unbranded Light, Olive Oil Spray or Olive oil in a spritzer/spray bottle

Liver of Sulphur Patina Gel is often referred to as LOS. LOS can be used to create beautiful rainbow patinas or grey-black patinas on Metal Clay. LOS gives depth and definition to textured pieces.

Jax Silver Blackening creates the very dark black contrast and definition on silver that many jewellery makers like. **Many of the material mentioned are in stock and available at www.metalclay.com.au**

DRYING:

A food dehydrator **or** a hairdryer are common forced drying methods. We recommend checking pieces often during force drying. Turning pieces over regularly should prevent warping. When using a hairdryer - Prepare a cardboard box making cut outs to prop up and position the hairdryer in. The dryer is then positioned to blow warm air – **not** hot setting - into the box. If necessary, wedge or tape the hairdryer into place** Place metal clay pieces to be dried onto Teflon secured to a heat resistant surface (smooth tile, rubber block etc) If possible elevate the tile/block drying surface from the base of the box to allow the warm air to circulate. The top of the hairdryer box can be **partly** covered with a towel to harness the circulating heat (**ALWAYS ensure that the hairdryer fan area is **NOT** covered) Don't leave the hairdryer and box unattended.

Metal clay can be left to air dry for +-hours (depending on the ambient temperature) or overnight. This is often a specific choice because force drying can warp pieces. Pieces should still be turned over occasionally. Candle/coffee cup warmers or a very low set electric oven 75C -100C max can also be used to force dry metal clay.

Placing a finished and "dried" metal clay piece onto a mirror or glass and checking for any condensation, can ensure a piece is properly dried. No condensation will indicate that the piece is dried.

FIRING:

A kiln with an electronic temperature controller suitable for metal clay is always the first prize or optimum for Metal Clay enthusiasts but a butane torch + fibre brick or a gas stove top (or gas BBQ) + stainless steel net will certainly do the job initially.

Butane Torches – Japanese made torches are available from our shop. They\se quality torches are always sold unfilled. Butane Gas is available at any good hardware store and at Jaycar. Always check that the gas comes with the correct adaptor to fill the torch.

Kilns and quality butane torches are available at www.metalclay.com.au