



www.metalclay.com.au

IS THIS THE FIRST TIME YOU ARE USING METAL CLAY?

Here are some basic things to think of before you get started.

You can also find a lot of information on our website: www.metalclay.com.au

BEFORE YOU OPEN YOUR PACKAGE.

Metal Clay is water-based clay, so it will dry out quickly when exposed to air. **Think about your design, and make sure you have all the tools you need before you start.** Keep a small pot/bowl of water and a fine paint brush next to you. If your hands are dry, moisten them with a few drops of olive oil spray before you start. You can use olive oil spray on your hands when necessary but don't overdo it.

The secret to success when working with Metal Clay is to follow the 10-80-10 rule.

1. Spend no more than **10%** of your time working on the initial shaping and moulding of the wet clay.
2. When completely dry – the critical stage - spend **80%** of your time on filing, cutting, engraving and sanding the dry clay. The piece should now be more (much more!) or less finished.
3. And the remaining **10%** happens after firing, when you finish the piece by sanding, burnishing, and polishing.

The well planned project begins!

Cut off as much clay as you need, and put the rest back into the little zip lock bag that it came in - wrapped up tightly (no surrounding air) and carefully in cling film.

Put the clay you are going to use in some cling film and knead it gently for a few seconds, just to soften it a little before you start working.

If you are rolling out your clay, place it on a non-stick surface, (I also use good quality baking sheet to cover the non-stick work surface) and then cover your clay with baking paper before you start rolling. This will stop it from sticking to the roller and the work surface. It will also help to keep the clay pliable. If little cracks start to appear along the edge of the clay, use the tip of your finger, or the paint brush, to moisten it with a **tiny** drop of water. **Don't add too much water as the clay might get a bit sticky.** If you do add a bit too much water at this stage – roll the clay on the baking sheet until it dries out a **little**. You may be left with some residue on the baking sheet and may need to get a clean replacement piece. If you need to leave your work briefly, always cover it with a small piece of cling film or damp (not soggy) dish cloth (I use no brand dish cloths cut into smallish squares).

Use a damp finger or the brush to smooth out the clay, and to moisten it every now and then, if you are working with it for a long time. If you are using cutters or rubberstamps, oil them **very lightly** with olive oil before use. This will stop them sticking to the metal clay.

If you break your piece?

Don't worry, if you repair it well, you won't even see the repair when it is when finished. Use Art Clay Paste to fit the pieces back together. Add a good-sized blob to ensure the two surfaces are "glued" together, and cover the surface crack with more Paste. Dry the piece completely with a hairdryer, smooth with 3 grades of sandpaper –starting with rough, medium and then very fine. Repeat if necessary. If you find it impossible to repair, you can always use your imagination and make a new piece out of the bits, By adding new clay to it to make a different shape, or use the bits as applications on another piece.

You can also remoisten the clay with a bit of work. Poke holes in it, add water and wrap in double layers of cling film, leave for a day. 'Massage' the clay, if needed, poke some more holes, add more water and leave to rest. After a while you will have a lump of clay again. It is never as good to work with as a fresh piece of clay but I have had many successes with rehydrated metal clay. If nothing else works, grind it up into fine powder, add a little water, and make paste out of it.

When can you fire your piece?

When you are happy with the finish of your piece? No unwanted little scratches, marks or dents in the surface? Remember that it will change into hard metal which is much more difficult to work with. Also, feel with your finger around the piece, imagining what it will feel like when it is metal – will there be any snags or sharp edges that you don't want there? Jewellery must always be comfortable and safe to wear. Make sure your piece is completely dry. If there is moisture trapped inside you might get cracks or little eruptions on the surface, or, even worse, your piece might explode, when you fire it. Fire the piece as per the instructions (Check the www.metalclay.com.au website for the instruction sheet on torch or gas stove top firing). If using a torch or gas stove, check that the piece has shrunk about 8-10% You can tell this by drawing a line around your project on a piece of paper, before it is fired. After it has been fired and is COMPLETELY cool, place it back on the paper and check for shrinkage. If it has not shrunk you can fire it again.

The piece has turned white after firing – why?

The piece is covered in what remains of the burned off binder You will need to seal the surface of the fired clay (burnish it) to bring out the silver shine. Do this with a stainless steel brush. This will give you a nice matt surface. If you want a higher shine, sand the piece with 3 grades of wet and dry sandpaper – 400 – 600 – and 1200. Follow up with a metal burnisher and a tumbler if you are lucky enough to have one.

The final step is a good rub with a high quality metal polish and a lint free cloth. Congratulations! Your 99.9% Fine Silver piece is finished!