



## Makin's Clay - Basic Instructions for Use.

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Always set up your work area before opening your clay. Makin's clay is an air-dry clay, and the curing process begins as soon as the clay is exposed to the air. Try to work in a cool environment because if it is too warm the clay may split as it dries. Avoid force drying. If the clay begins to dry too quickly, a light mist spray of water can be applied. Always seal work to protect it from moisture when the piece is thoroughly dry (24 hours to 2 weeks – depending on size and thickness of the project). The clay remains slightly flexible when dry and is remarkably resilient.

### Basic Requirements

**Water.** One container (for clean-up) and also a fine spray mist bottle. Be careful not to over-wet your clay, as it can cause slumping and distortion.

**Work surface.** This can be glass, plastic, a ceramic tile or heavy card.

**Plastic lunch wrap.** Use this to stretch over your work surface to avoid the clay sticking and to cover clay to prevent it drying out as you work, particularly useful when using extruded pieces or cutting many pieces.

**Chux or similar super wipes.** You can also use a towel but most towels produce lint, which will contaminate your clay. Reserve one wet super wipe to keep your hands and tools clean and free of clay, a damp (not wet) and folded super wipe laid in a foam meat tray or similar will provide a handy and accessible storage container for clay whilst you are mixing or working.

**Spacers (Batters).** These are used if you are rolling the clay with the roller when an even thickness is desired, can be anything as simple as paddle pop sticks or thick card of the desired thickness.

**White craft glue.** In a project that requires layering of clay it is important to bond clay pieces together permanently with white glue. Apply sparingly with a soft brush. Can also be watered down and several coats applied to seal the piece. Also use to affix the clay permanently to objects.

**Acrylic sealer.** Any water based sealer can be used and there are many good quality ones available today with a range of characteristics to suit any project. Always test sealers on scraps of clay to determine the final effect before using it on a finished piece.

**Acrylic paints.** Again, there are many good quality paints available today, these can be mixed into the clay, brushed or sprayed on. Good effects can be obtained by painting onto wet clay, be aware that it looks a lot better when dry than wet so don't overwork.

**Metallic powders** such as Pearlex can also be used to tint the clay, either buffed onto the clay while still damp, left to dry and then sealed, or worked through in liberal quantities.

**Armature materials.** The use of wire to give internal structure and support is recommended when hand building. Aluminium foil is recommended for economic reasons. Scrunch it as firmly as possible and try to achieve a smooth surface to layer clay onto. Remember to wash your hands thoroughly before using your clay.

**Corn Starch or Talcum Powder.** Dust lightly onto press moulds and texture plates as a release agent then blow out excess before use.

**Sticky labels and a pen.** Invaluable for labeling your clay, especially when mixing or for differentiating between white/natural/glow in the dark.

### **Tools.**

When using cutters, have a pad of wet superwipe handy to press the cutter onto in between cuts to keep the cutter edges clean. Use a cotton bud or soft brush to clean any clay from the cutters before re-using as it will make the new clay stick.

Window cleaner is good for clean up and does not promote rust.

Use a damp cloth to keep tools clean of small clay particles as you work to avoid contamination.

Make sure you store your cutters and tools in such a way as they do not rattle around against each other and burr the cutting edges, a box or container lined with foam is ideal.

### **Clay condition.**

The clay is ready to use straight from the packet. At first it will be soft and difficult to work with, but soon becomes more plastic and manageable. Work quickly and remember to cover any clay you are not using with a damp superwipe or wrap it back up in plastic lunch wrap.

If the clay is old it will hold its block shape and release from the plastic wrapper easily. At this point it is not suitable for hand building but is excellent to use with cutters and should be rolled out immediately on your plastic covered work surface to the desired thickness and cut.

The application of water, when hand building and modeling, helps decrease the likelihood of splitting. If splitting does occur, dampen the area and back fill with damp to wet clay. If splitting persists, sparingly add glycerin, a drop on the palm of your hand kneaded through the clay should suffice. The piece can also be placed in plastic to slow the drying process, but splitting usually becomes apparent very quickly.

### **Drying.**

Make sure you turn the piece to allow the base exposure to air.

Warping can result with large, flat pieces. Turn the piece regularly and place on a porous surface to dry, e.g. foam, batting or card. Pieces can be pressed flat under a weighted object after they are dried if warping has occurred and is not desired.

Allow for shrinkage during drying. The edges of pieces may need to be gently pushed back into contact with the surface they have been applied to as they dry. If this becomes a persistent problem, use a damp soft brush and thinned down white glue to adhere the edges down to the surface.

Do not force dry, as the outer surface will shrink at a greater rate, hardening prematurely and trapping moisture within.

Some more hints.

- ◆ Use the pointy tool to make holes for hanging in the clay before it dries. Holes can be enlarged with a drill bit if required when the piece is dry.
- ◆ Bling (Sparkles), lace, feathers etc. Use liberally but make sure all are firmly attached with white glue. Looks great imbedded into damp clay.
- ◆ Use a damp finger or paint brush to smooth any rough edges after cutting - before they dry.
- ◆ Eyes, beaks, toes, etc can be pre-made and left to dry before use. Brush contact surface lightly with white glue before attaching to wet clay.
- ◆ Polystyrene can be carved to shape or pre-formed pieces can be purchased from most craft shops. Lightly coat with white glue before adding clay.
- ◆ Prepare timber pieces by base coating with acrylic paint before embellishing. Apply clay while clay is still damp. Use white glue to ensure adequate adhesion between timber and clay.
- ◆ For figurative work you can make a range of Caucasian to Olive flesh toning by mixing terracotta and white.
- ◆ Use a sharp needle tool or darning needle to pierce beads for stringing. Hold the bead in your finger tips and push through towards the pad of your index finger (carefully!) while the clay is still wet. Gently rotate back and forth until you can feel the point emerging, remove tool and wipe clean with a damp cloth, re insert the point back in the hole until the tool point shows through – neaten edge with damp paint brush.
- ◆ Fantastic surface results can be achieved by stamping or pressing into the clay with found objects, highlight with acrylic, Lumiere or Pinata Inks