

The Basics of Air Dry Clay

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Supplies:

Air Dry Clay

Polymer Clays: Lightweight, flexible and dry by evaporation, are white in color

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|---------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Delight (Paperclay) | Makin's Clay | Fimo Air Basic |
| Model Magic | Cloud Clay | Hearty Clay |
| Lumina | Sculpt-it | |

Paper/Earth Clays: wet, heavy many are lightweight when dry by evaporation

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| Creative Paperclay | DAS | LaDoll |
| Premier | Activ-Clay | Plus |
| Marblex | Crayola Air-Dry | Cellucray |

Epoxy Clays: 2 part resin and hardener; dry very hard by chemical reaction

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| Quick Wood | Magic Sculpt | All-Fix |
| Procreate | Fix-it Sculpt | Apoxie Sculpt |

Clay Tools

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| Wood, Plastic and/or Metal Clay Modeling Tools | (Orange Stick) |
| Cutting Blade | Cutting Knife |
| Acrylic Roller | (Acrylic Brayer) |
| Metal shape cutters | Plastic shape cutters |
| Impressing Plates | Texture Plates |
| Embossing Envelopes | Rubber Stamps |
| Silicone Mat | (Parchment Paper) |
| Sanding Tools | Baby Wipes |
| Weldbond Glue | (Sobo Glue) |
| | Small curved scissors |

Working with Air Dry Clay:

Always keep the clay in a sealed plastic bag when not in use. Keep inside the original packaging or wrap in plastic wrap then store in a air tight container or ziploc bag. Take out only the amount needed for the immediate project. Air dry clays can be kept workable longer by covering with a wet paper towel. Working with wet hands helps smooth the clay. Some clays such as Makin's are easier to work with when using an Acrylic Extender. The extender will also slow down the drying process. Clean up with soap and water. Epoxy clays should be cleaned up before setting as solvents must be used when the clay is dry.

Work the clay into a ball and smooth creases out of the clay. The clay can then be shaped. Use a silicone sheet, parchment paper, waxed paper, a plastic sheet, a sheet protector or Plexiglass sheet to keep the clay clean and prevent sticking to tabletops.

To flatten clay, use an acrylic roller or brayer. The paper/earth based clays tend to crack in thick applications. To repair, thin a small amount of clay with water and fill the cracks in the dry clay. Allow to dry and sand smooth.

The clay can be impressed with texture, tools, rubber stamps or objects; can be hand shaped; and can be placed into commercial or handmade molds.

There is no need to run air dry clays through a clay conditioning machine as the clay does not need to be worked like heat cured polymer clay that must be baked. Place finished clay pieces on an acrylic sheet to air dry: turn after several hours to allow the clay to dry evenly and prevent warping. Allow clay to cure dry over night before painting. The clay pieces tend to warp or curl during the drying process. Turning the pieces over help keep them flat. However, if the cured clay is warped, simply spray the back with water (distilled) and place under pressure. Use a board and place heavy objects on top. Allow the piece to dry before removing the weight.

Adhere clay motifs to surfaces with Weldbond or Sobo glue. Both dry clear and are archival. The polymer type clays remain somewhat soft and pliable and may be taped in place. The paper/earth based clays are hard (not waterproof) and should be shaped to fit the surface while somewhat damp. Epoxy based clays should be applied and shaped to the surface (they do not need glue to adhere like the first two) while workable. Use flexible molds for epoxy clays and spray with cooking spray for easier release. Most air dry clays can be carved and sanded when dry and accept paint and other finishes well. Stamped clay may resemble the indentations of 'fossils'; cast clay motifs are raised.

Making a Mold:

To make a reusable mold for air dry clay use Sculpy or other polymer clay that must be baked. Condition the clay in a Pasta Machine by running the clay through the machine about 10 times until the clay is easy to shape. The clay may be rolled on a flat surface to the appropriate size needed using an acrylic roller or brayer. Lightly dust the roller with cornstarch to prevent sticking. The edges can be trimmed to make a square or rectangular block.

An adjustable jig can be made using (2) 1/4" basswood pieces clamped to a table. The size of the stamp to be molded determines the width between the basswood. Line with aluminum foil. Place the conditioned clay into the lined jig and roll the clay out to fill. Impress objects such as jewelry findings or seashells (this may require a thicker slab of clay than the 1/4" depth jig) or rubber stamps. Press the object into the clay to make a good, even impression that can be filled with air dry clay.

Edges can be trimmed with a straight clay cutter once the object is impressed in the clay and the clay removed from the jig. Use the foil to lift the clay block from the mold after impressing. Deepen impressions or smooth out parts that are not needed in the impression with clay tools. Keep the clay on the aluminum foil and pull the foil loosely up over the edges to keep them from burning. Bake the mold at 275° for about 15 minutes in a toaster oven.

When the mold has cooled, first wash with soap and water and a small scrub brush. To use, dust the inside with cornstarch using an old #4, #5 or #6 Round brush. Repeat the cornstarch each time the mold is used. Press a ball of clay into the mold and smooth out to the edges. Try to use a ball of clay that is the correct size for the mold. Make an initial impression and remove excess clay. Remove the clay and reshape into a ball. Use a diameter gauge to accurately size the ball and write the size on the back of the mold with a permanent pen for later reference. Or the excess clay can be feathered out onto the mold if working the motif into a collage.

Air dry polymer clay such as Delight can be trimmed with scissors when removed from the mold or when completely dry. Allow the clay to dry long enough to hold together when peeled out of the mold without altering the impression. The soft polymer clays can be left in the mold until dry for better detail.

Impressing with Embossing Envelopes:

Embossing Envelopes used in embossing machines with paper can also be used with clay. Line the envelope with a folded piece of Waxed Paper and place a piece of slightly flattened clay and place between the folds. Roll the clay out with a rolling pin (marble). Remove the clay from the waxed paper and turn often to dry. Clay will have a positive image on one side and a negative image on the other.

Painting Air Dry Clay:

The dry clay may be sealed with an all purpose sealer. Polymer air dry clays soften with the application of paint. Allow each layer to dry completely before applying the next. Use two basecoat layers to cover the clay with solid color. The acrylic paint will help stiffen the soft clays when the paint is cure dried. Finish with 2 or 3 coats of varnish (Delta Exterior/Interior Varnish will not stick to other objects painted with acrylics). All air dry clays accept acrylic paint well. Objects can be painted prior to gluing but varnish only after paint and glue are cured.