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Fun with Fabric by Karen M. Rhodes [The Clay Alley](#)

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I started experimenting with polymer clay and fabric when I wanted to dress up the inside of my boxes.

I tried several methods, including glue and double-sided adhesive, but each time I hated the mess and the uncertainty that the method would let loose.

It occurred to me one day that I could finish my boxes with clay backed fabric! All I need to do was figure out the best way to do it. So the experimenting began.

Once I found the best way to do it, I began experimenting with clay and fabric in other areas. Soon ornaments and jewelry had a new embellishment! And the price was right! I found that I could buy a one-eighth yard of fabric at my local Wal-Mart for less than 50 cents!

You can create many more objects, such as miniature pictures and tablecloths, clothing for clay figurines, fabric embellished light bulb vessels and anything your imagination can dream up!



Small designs worked the best for me but you might find a fabric that you want to play with.



My boxes are lined with black velveteen, while other items are cotton. I find that the cotton has a better weave and will allow the clay to adhere into the fabric better.

Although the velveteen frays when running it through the pasta machine, I just cut those areas off and reuse the clay in my base sheet.

What you will need:

- Fabric - preferably a cotton or cotton blend
- Clay - any colors you choose. My projects are done with Premo
- Scissors
- Pasta Machine - for reference I use the Atlas
- Something to cover or line: a paper-mache box, a glass ornament, or scrap clay.
- Welbond glue
- paper and pencil

Step One:

Choose a base. For a box base, I use a paper-mache box, coated with Welbond glue, which dries clear, doesn't crack and is strong.

I also cover glass ornaments with Welbond.

For jewelry, I use scrap clay.

Step Two:

First, make a template the size of the area you want to cover, especially if the fabric will be going on the inside of a box or vessel.

Then coat the base with glue, swirling the glue with a brush so to make hills and valleys (to get better adhesion with the clay.)

Step Three:

Once the glue is dry, apply a layer of clay -- you decide what thickness. For boxes, I use a #4 or #5 setting (medium to medium thin).

For ornaments, I use the 2 setting (thicker) since the base is also what will be seen. The base clay gives the clay backed fabric additional adhesion.

Step Four:

Once you have selected your fabric, cut it about a half inch bigger than you will actually need. This helps (especially with velveteen) to cut away the frayed material.

Remember, on light colored fabric, use light colored clay, and on dark fabric use dark clay.



Step Five:

Set your pasta machine to the number 2 setting and run a sheet of clay through it.

Now lay the fabric, design up, onto the clay. I run my hand over it to help the two stick to each other.

Run the clay and fabric through the pasta machine again - same #2 setting. Now you have clay backed fabric!



For ornaments, I use a circular template, lay the template onto the fabric and cut around it.

You can use cookie cutters to make a design but since they won't cut through the fabric, you are still going to have to cut it with scissors.

Animal prints would be great to play with in this manner!



Step Six:

Press the clay side of the fabric against the clay side of the base.

Smooth the fabric over on the ends to give it a nice shape.

With the ornament, since the fabric is only a part of the project, you can add several rolls of clay around the design to create interesting details.

If you are creating jewelry, you can use some addition clay to create a setting. Then add your pin back or other finding.



Step Seven:

Bake according to the clay manufacturer's specifications.

I hope this has given you some ideas on how to incorporate fabric into your designs!

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