

[Editor's Letter](#) | [Letters to the Editor](#) |
[Beginners' Corner](#) | [Questions and
Answers](#) | [Creating Transfers with
Graphic Design Software](#) | [Trina's
Excellent Adventure](#) | [Carpal Tunnel
Damage](#) | ["Scrapendipity" Beads](#) |
[Fun with Fabric](#) | [Email Us!](#) | [Home](#)

[Advertisers' Page](#) |

Questions and Answers

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What's the best type of ink to use for stamping on polymer clay (e.g., pigment, permanent, etc.)?

Any recommendations for coloring the stamped images? Thanks!

Nancy Carney

Nancy:

I suggest oil-based inks and pencils for stamping and coloring on cured polymer clay. The oil will sink into the clay, creating a stable color bond. Acrylic paints tend to peel away.

Anyone else have advice for Nancy?

Deirdre

Dear Polyzine:

Hi there, was excited to stumble upon your website.

As a novice to polymer clay, would you know or do you do any type of instruction?

I live in Pierce County (Puyallup) and can't seem to find anyone in the area who knows of any classes/instruction.

If you have any insight I would greatly appreciate it.

I thank you,
Gerri

Dear Gerri:

I checked out where Pierce County/Puyallup is located and found you in the lovely state of Washington. There are two guilds in your region; you can find them on the [regional guilds page](#) at the [National Polymer Clay Guild's website](#).

Also at the NPCG website, you can find a listing of [classes](#) as well.

Enjoy the clay!

Deirdre



Dear Deirdre:

I have just started in the polymer clay activities (Ha Ha). That means that I am hooked totally. I have been making beads and hand carving them. For example I have a book that shows different techniques in working with Polymer Clay. One of them was the carving of "bone beads".

Do you know of any sites that may have more information on the carving aspect of the beads? I search for some the other night and couldn't find any.

Just wondering,
Cheri

Dear Cheri:

Oh, good question. I did a quick search on [Alta Vista](#) for "+carving bone" and "+instructions" and I got a lot of neat hits for carving equipment, including this link:

[Carving Tool](#)

I did a second search using "+carving +instructions" and found a lot of sites dedicated to wood carving. I am guessing the techniques and tools will be very similar.

Good luck,

Deirdre



Hi:

About 5 or 6 years ago, I ate a very small amount of the already baked clay. (I am a little paranoid!) and was wondering if anything can still happen, like if it stayed in me and it has been growing cancer or anything else if you could get back to me ASAP that would be good. What I got from your article was that it is not toxic, is that right?

Kim

Dear Kim:

Eating something like clay can be scary, I agree. Good news: all reports from the manufactures agree that polymer clay is non-toxic. I have heard of people's dogs who eat the stuff on a regular basis and are not adversely affected.

I'm no doctor, but I'd guess that little piece has passed through your system years ago. You might want to check with a doctor to get an educated opinion, however!

Deirdre



Hi there

I'm in nz and so am using a different brand of clay, but was wondering whether anyone had tried making cutlery handles? If so can you put them in the dishwasher?

Thanks
Maya

Maya:

You certainly can use polymer clay to create cutlery handles. Make sure you keep the clay away from any surface of the cutlery that will come into contact with food.

I wouldn't recommend using the dishwasher for two reasons: if the water is too hot, it can soften or burn the polymer clay, and, more importantly, the warm water can seep into cracks in your clay, and the heat from the drying cycle will cause the water to expand, cracking your handles.

I've seen some very beautifully decorated handles, so enjoy the creative possibilities of that surface!

Deirdre



Jeff: You wrote a while ago asking about special tools. Here's a response:

Jeff,

I am a clayer and an occupational therapist. I have used polymer clay as a therapy medium for folks with decreased fine motor coordination and decreased pinch and grasp. Working the clay to get it ready to use is good for strengthening the grasp and pinch.

You can make the tools for working clay with larger handles for easier grip, and add a texture for a surer grip. Toothpicks, pins, nails, small metal files, etc. can all be made into tools that allow you to better grip your tool and to cheaply make yourself lots of helpers.

If you have done any wood sculpting, you can use some of your wood tools for polymer clay, such as Super sculpey. Also look at all those wood scraps that could be sanded to make stands or plaques to put your creations on as well as using your wood stains on the wood or polymer clay. You can also use cookie cutters and cookie stamps.

You didn't say how long since your stroke, but probably at least a year since you say you're on disability. Keep working on your coordination, and your ability to use your

hands and arms at every opportunity, because you can continue to get better even after the optimal window of the first six months or year.

If I can help you in any way with some problem solving with adaptations, please contact me through Polyzine.

Beckie



Hi!

I just found your website. Thanks for the great info. I was wondering if you knew of a color blending chart for Sculpey III? I have one for Fimo, and I am trying to make a pretty light yellow for use in a flower cane, but I can't figure out how to do it.

I use Sculpey III Yellow and white (I've tried 1/4 yellow to every bar of white) It looks sort of greenish. Just wondering if you know of a site with color blending hints or if you would know how to make a nice yellow color (not so bright as the packaged yellow). Any info would be a great help. Thanks so much!

Also, I would be willing to purchase a color sampler that someone has made with recipies. Know of anyone willing to sell one?

Roxanne

Dear Roxanne:

I am not a color expert, but I believe if you toss in a touch of red or orange, you will get rid of the green tinge. I understand that to cancel out the color, you need to mix in a touch of the opposite color, and on the color wheel, orange is opposite green.

Can anyone else offer suggestions?

Deirdre



Hello there -

I am making beaded hair sticks and I am having a very hard time finding a glue to harden up. All the glues that have been suggested to me are more like a rubber cement; therefore, the beads move. Please help me if you can, I am very frustrated and would like some advice!

Thank you for your help,
Tiffany

Hi Tiffany!

You want to get your hands on some Zap-A-Gap, Insta-Cure, or any of the cyanoacrylate glues. You can find these glues at your local toy and hobby store.

Enjoy!

Deirdre



Hi

My name is Terri and I used to do quite a lot of work with Fimo clay. I got busy and haven't used it for quite some time--it was in a Rubbermaid container and inside plastic bags. I now work with underprivileged kids and I would like to work with the Fimo with them. Is there any way we can still use all of the Fimo I own (it's quite a bit)? Or is there a time when the clay is just not workable anymore?

Thanks
Terri
Ontario Canada

Dear Terri:

You stored your clay exactly right, and it should still be workable. As long as the clay was never warm enough to cure either partially or fully, you should be fine.

Fimo is one of the more difficult clays to condition, so you might want to invest in some diluent to help in the conditioning process, especially if you are working with kids. You could also start them out with one of the softer clays, then introduce them to Fimo.

Either way, good luck to you and thank you for helping these kids out.

Deirdre



Dear Readers:

Last month, a reader wanted to know about digital cameras. Here are some responses:

Dear Editor,

This is in response to a letter from Tejae. She asked about an economical digital camera to send pics of her work via e-mail to her parents.

Well, I don't know much about digital cameras, but I can still e-mail or post pics of my work by using my scanner. I just lay the work on the scanner then scan, save and e-mail or post to a site. If your object is so big that the lid doesn't close all the way just put a heavy towel over it. I've done this many times and it works great. Hope this helps.

msweetstuff
(marty)

Finding the right digital camera takes some research because there are so many with a variety of features. So, these are the considerations you have to look for.

If you are only going to take digital images for use on the web or will need small (4 x 6) prints you do not need a top of the line camera. You can find one for about \$200 to \$300.

But check around; there are a lot of bargains for the same model. Also, try Ebay. Many people get a good low-price camera and then decide to upgrade later.

The important features are to have at least 1.5 Megapixel resolution and 3x OPTICAL zoom. Your computer model will determine the interface you need.

For small items such as you indicate you need a macro capability. That is a feature that allows you to focus on small items closely without them becoming out of focus.

Some comparison sites: DealTime.com
Steve's Digicams

Jacqueline Gikow

Atelier Gikow

National Polymer Clay Guild Newsletter Editor
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Hi:

I was looking at your website and would like to know where I can buy "Flex Mold" material that you mentioned. I have never made a mold before but it sounds interesting and I would like to try it. Please send me any information you have...I'd appreciate it.

Joyce Wilson

Dear Joyce:

There are all kinds of places on the Internet you can purchase flex mold material from. Here's a quick list:

- [Perma-Flex](#): Offers a wide variety of materials for making molds
- [Microsonic](#): Two-part silicone molding material available in single-use packages

These two places should get you started!

Deirdre



Dear Editor:

Whenever I cut a slice off my canes, I get this unround shape instead of a perfect circle. I put it in the fridge for at least half an hour and it does not work. I have even put it in the freezer and it still gets distorted. Also how do I flatten slices onto a pen, etc without distorting them?

And (sorry, one more question) when I make, for example, a bullseye cane, how do I make sure the layers outside of the log of clay on the inside are the right thickness. They always seem to be too thick or too thin. Thank you, I don't expect to get all my answers I need, but please try to answer one of them. Thanks again!

A Reader

Dear Reader:

Canes do smush somewhat when they are being cut. One way to alleviate this problem is by holding the cane straight up in the air and cutting across the top. I've seen people do this with great results; I, however, never seemed to have gotten the hang of it.

Another way to combat the smushing problem is to make sure you use a very sharp knife and apply light pressure.

Make sure your slices are very thin as you cut them, and when you roll them onto your pen, they will not distort very much.

I am not sure what you mean by the last part of your question -- if your rings are out of proportion, you need to tinker until you get the right ratios -- perhaps you could start with a #1 thickness, then a #3, and so on, until you find the thickness that is appropriate for a particular size inner core. Also, use the pasta machine to help measure your thicknesses -- don't just roll out some clay and put it on the cane; rather, roll out five sheets at #1 then add them one at a time so you can keep track of how thick the ring is when you like the proportion.

Can anyone else help this reader?

Deirdre



Dear Editor:

I have always loved scrimshaw, and I have done some nice projects on ivory and horn. But what I really yearn to do is learn to make scrimshaw jewelry by making my own molds (to keep and use again) to do a delicate impression in ivory-like polymer clay, ink and finish, etc. I have searched on the internet for hours and have found some artists who produce lovely work (but, of course, are not willing to share their secrets).

What I crave is a step-by-step process to make "faux" scrimshaw from polymer clay and how to make the molds. Thanks for listening. Oh, I do hope you or someone will be willing to help!

[Janis Parks](#)

Dear Readers:

I've already e-mailed Janis with some suggestions, but if anyone else has any, they would be most welcomed!

Deirdre



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