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Elements of Polymer Clay or Tips for the Artistically Challenged by Jeannie Havel

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Polymer clay is a labor of love, right? All the rolling and kneading and cutting is worth every minute, when we see the results the artist in us imagined.

Well, after 10 years of working with polymer clay, I am still waiting for the artist in me to emerge. Sure, I want my [Monet Cane](#) to look as good as the next clay Goddess', but the thought of making all those strips of clay, having to stack them "just right," and then reducing them without too much distortion, makes me wonder why I ever picked up my first pack of Sculpey.

But polymer clay is an addiction. And while I shudder at the thought of working hours on end to produce a decent looking cane, I just can't give it up. The solution? If you can't be genuinely artistic, then get really good at cutting corners. That I can do! I call it "elements of polymer clay," and here's my trick:

Supplies:

- Clay, well-conditioned (your choice of brand and colors)
- Nublade or tissue blade
- Play-Doh Fun Factory (\$4 at Wal-Mart in the toy section) –OR—
- Play-Doh One Stop Playshop (Deluxe work station - \$19.95 at Toys 'r' Us)
- Fiskars Two-Sided Cutting Mat (\$6 at Wal-Mart in the quilting section)
- Cling Wrap and containers for storage



Step One:

Purchase a Play-Doh Fun Factory at Wal-Mart or other discount store for approximately \$4.00. There are two extruding plates in each box that make a total of 10 patterns.

The Fun Factory sets are mostly the same except for slight variations in packaging and colors of Play-Doh inside. (Play-Doh One Stop Playshop is the deluxe model).



Step Two:

Condition clay as usual and form small sections about the size of a decent meatball. Place one extrusion plate in the slot on front of the Fun Factory, choosing the pattern you wish to create.

I make a lot of tubes, square logs, flat strips, and stars. (These are very handy for checkerboard canes, Monet Canes, Navajo designs, lace canes, and simple flower designs that all look as if they took hours to make).

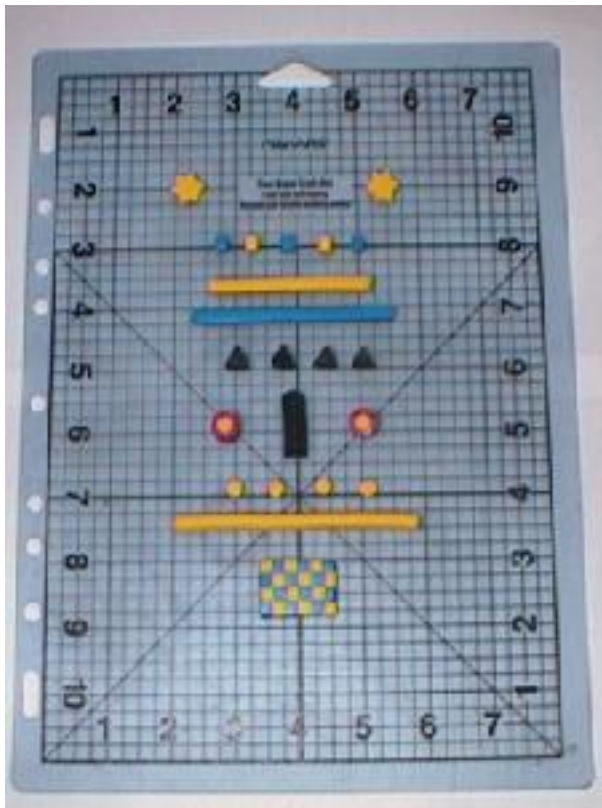


Press down on the Fun Factory handle and watch the clay ooze out in long, perfect (and I mean **perfect**) shapes. Each one is identical in size and shape. No rolling, no reducing, no kidding! Cut clay from Fun Factory with blade.

Step Three:

Practice good time management skills by making "elements" while watching TV or talking on the telephone. (Note: Try to avoid family dinnertime, operating a moving vehicle, and special moments with significant other, although this may not always be possible).

Let the elements rest to restore the clay's firmness.



Step Four:

Assemble elements into a pleasing cane design. Mix 'n match elements with sheets of clay, or use elements to form ready-to-cut face canes. . . OR . . .

Wrap elements in cling wrap or parchment and store in plastic containers. (I have some elements that are several years old and just as fresh as the day I made them). The parchment will not stick to the clay, and the plasticizer will leach just enough to give the elements a workable firmness.

Step Five:

Look through your collection of clay books and magazines or check out back issues of *Polyzine* for projects that use geometric shapes in their design. I think you will be surprised at how many you can find.

Then, on some cold, snowy night, get out your elements, and dig into your project. It's fast, it's easy, and the results speak for themselves.

Special Note:

Cleaning the Fun Factory may appear daunting, but here are two quick tips:

1. Place tools in freezer for 15-20 minutes. Clay will pop right off.
2. Pay your children to clean them like I do.