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I just love the look of Raku, all kinds of Raku, but particularly the rough textured, multi-colored Raku. I've tried many different techniques to duplicate this type of surface. I finally found one that I think looks surprisingly similar.

Here's the supply list you need to get started:

- black polymer clay
- micaceous iron oxide, aka Raku sauce (available at art supply stores)
- skewers/toothpicks
- Styrofoam®
- stipple paintbrush or very stiff brush
- interference paints (blue, violet, red, orange, green, gold)
- iridescent bronze, gold, copper

To make the beaded necklace shown, I used bicone bead rollers from Sue Lee at [Poly-Tools](#). These are custom sized because I like large beads. You can use any size or shape you like though.

**Step One:** Condition your clay, make your beads and bake according to the manufacturer's instructions. I use black clay because I always have it around. You can use scrap clay too since you will be painting the entire bead anyway.

After baking, I do not prepare my beads in any way prior to painting. If you like, you can sand slightly for better adhesion but I'm simply too lazy!

**Step Two:** Scoop out some micaceous iron oxide - I will call it Raku sauce from here on -- and let it set up for a few minutes. This creates a better texture. I put my beads either on the end of a wooden skewer or toothpick to hold them while I paint; picking them up and placing them back in the Styrofoam® as needed.

You can assembly-line paint them this way.

Using a stiff stipple brush, coat the bead at least once with the Raku sauce. Don't be skimpy with this application. Sometimes I will paint the bead twice if I want lots of texture.

This acrylic-based product dries really fast and the first bead is usually dry by the time I'm done with the last bead so you can do the second coat immediately.

When doing a second coat, pull the brush outward to leave little peaks of Raku sauce if you want lots of texture on your beads. You can also pop the beads into the oven to dry them just keep the temp low.

**-----Editor's Note: Do NOT put Styrofoam® in the oven-----**  
**Polystyrene products are flammable and release toxic fumes when burned.**

**Step Three:** Now for the color! Paint on a base coat of color using one of the iridescents like gold, bronze or copper. Of course, there isn't anything stopping you from using all these colors together and not applying the interference colors. This is just a different look and opens up lots of variations.

For the Raku look though, paint a base color but don't cover the entire bead. Dab a little section here and there.

Don't worry if you think you've used too much because you can just cover it up with the next step.

Decide on which colors you would like your Raku to be and begin assembly-line painting with your first color, say interference blue. Paint all your beads with your first color. Then continue on with however many colors you have chosen.

Sometimes I have a particular color scheme in mind; say a verdigris kind of look. For this I would use iridescent gold and interference green. It's not Raku but very pretty just the same. I've also done gold and interference red (the red actually looks more pink than red). How about an antiqued look using bronze, copper and silver?



I've also used Lumiere paints occasionally if I need a particular color. They have a great deep blue and purple.

So after dabbing on your choice of colors and covering the entire bead, take a step back to see if you

might want to add a bit more of your base color in case you got carried away.

I don't apply any kind of protective coating because I want the color to remain matte.

**Step Four:** Next choose some beads to go along with your color choice, string it up and you're ready to wear your new Raku inspired beads.

In the pictures, one necklace is strung using beads and buna cord. The other necklace is simply strung on a sterling necklace cable. You'll also see in the photos there are other shapes and applications for this technique. I've stamped into polymer, cut and shaped the bead, baked and painted them. I've also made shaped vessels, small square beads, large square beads, and rounds beads. Just leave it to your imagination.

You can apply this application to picture frames, those shaped paper boxes, your kids, whatever. Have fun with this!

If you have any questions, write to us at [pcPolyzine](mailto:pcPolyzine).

