

White Gothic Studios Presents: How to Make Polymer Clay Jewelry

The Roadmap:

First we will look at our basic tools and supplies, what you will need for most of the jewelry-making products.

Then we will take a look and learn our basic techniques that are used in many of the projects.

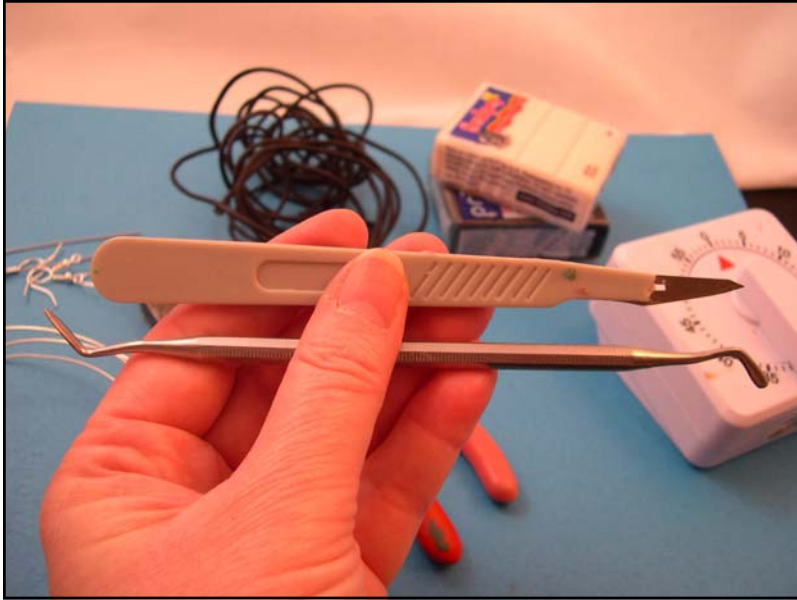
It is my hope that once you learn these basics, you will be able to go on and add onto the line of jewelry, adding your own unique designs, but will produce very market-ready products that have a crisp and professional look that is needed in the marketplace.



Let's Look at the Basic Supplies:

1. Polymer Clay in various color
2. Jewelry wire in various weights, from 20 to 30 gauge.
3. Wire Cutter
4. Round Needle Nose Pliers
5. Nylon cording and/or rubber cording
6. Long T-pins
7. Earring wires and Necklace Closures.





8. A baking timer (crucial)
9. Sharp Xacto knife or other cutting tool
10. Dental spatula or other smoothing tool
11. Pasta Machine to blend and flatten the clay. If you do not have a pasta machine dedicated to your clay work, you can use a rolling pin



Let's Talk Safety:

Polymer Clay is a very safe product, but you need to take certain precautions. If you are a beginner to the medium, be aware that you can bake polymer clay in your home oven, but you cannot use plates, pasta machines, cutting utensils with polymer clay and then use them again with food.

Once you use a pasta machine, knife, plate, pan, etc. with polymer clay, you must never use it with food again.

Also, it is very important that you check your polymer clay for the specific manufacturer's instructions in curing/baking the clay. Follow each manufacturer's suggested temperature and timing instructions.

The most important safety precaution is to always ALWAYS use a Timer. It is important not to burn polymer clay because if you do, it will give off toxic fumes. I have been working with polymer clay for about 10 years now and I still use a timer, and at least 80 percent of the time, I had forgotten something was baking and it was the timer that alerted me to remove the item from the oven. Always supervise children working with polymer clay.

Additional supplies (Optional):

1. Two 10" ceramic tiles (for leeching your clay)

2. Liquid polymer clay

3. Tiny sparkly seed beads

4. Magnetic necklace closures

5. Timer, Toothpicks

6. Toaster Oven

7. Pretty Labels

8. Iron-on Graphics

9. Glue Sticks

10. Brooch pins

11. Moldmaker

12. Liquid Sculpey

13. Rub-n-Buff

14. Aluminum baking tray

15. Jump rings

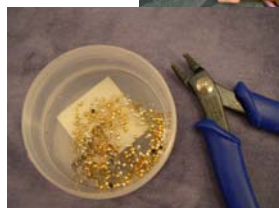
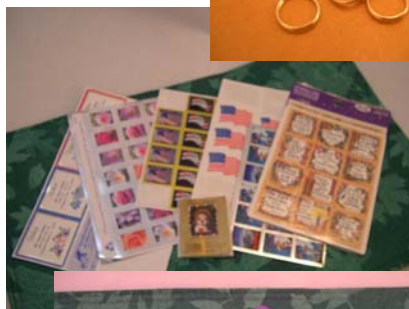
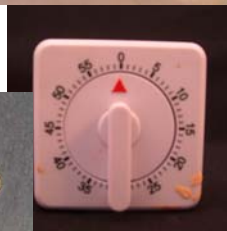
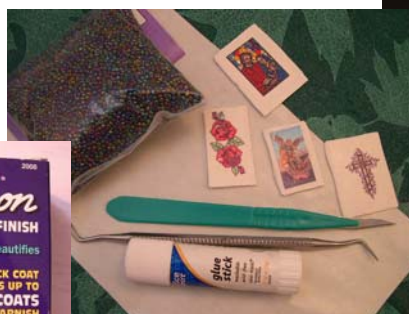
16. Pour-on High Gloss Finish

17. Necklace Closure

18. Earring Findings

19. 15 lb. Fishing line

20. Crimper tool and beads



Working with Polymer Clay:

There are now many brands of polymer clay; and they come in a rainbow of colors. You can choose to use polymer clay right out of the package. You can also begin with a few primary colors and blend and mix up any other color in the rainbow, which is the way I work.

I prefer to use Super Sculpey or Sculpey III because it is malleable right out the package. There is a new Fimo Soft that is much more manageable as well. Occasionally, once the clay is mixed to create a new color, it might become a little too manageable and need to be firmed up a little bit.

I have a short video from my dollmaking series that shows you how to blend two colors of clay as well as how to leech the clay if it is too soft. If you click on the video graphic to the right, it will take you there and show you.



I will describe it below in case you want the written instructions to bring with you to your art table, but if you see it done visually, you will instantly know how to do it.

Mixing the Clay to Achieve One solid Color:

In order to make a light blue from your primary colors, take 1 part blue and 1 part white and mix them up using your pasta machine or hands until every last bit of marbleizing is gone. You will have a lighter shade of blue. If you want it more pastel than it turned out, simply add another part white and mix again.

Leeching the Clay:

Once your clay is mixed, roll it out on the thickest setting on your pasta machine. If you are using a rolling pin, knitting needle or marker, roll out slabs 1/16th inch thick. Onto a 10 inch square ceramic tile, place down two pieces of clean, white copy paper. Lay your slabs of clay onto the white paper and cover with two additional pieces of clean, white copy paper. Lay another 10" ceramic tile on top to weigh it down. I like to add a big dictionary (or two push molds) to give it added weight.

Leave the clay to leech anywhere from 4 hours to 10 hours, depending upon how firm you want the clay to be. I roll mine out at night and leave it to leech over night. I remove it in the morning and place it into a plastic bag to keep it dust free and clean.

Some Common Mixing Formulas:



Faux Jade:

Mix up 1/2 oz. Translucent Clay with a piece of green clay the size of a common pea. Mix until most of the marbleizing is gone. You can adjust the shade of jade by adding slightly more green.



Skin Tones:

Mix the following formulas until all marbleizing disappears:

Caucasian: 1 oz. flesh or beige and one cranberry-sized ball of white.

African American: 1/4 oz. flesh or beige colored, 1/4 ounce translucent and 1/2 pea-sized brown clay.

Asian: 1 oz. flesh, 1/2 oz. translucent, 1/2 pea-sized in yellow.



Marbleizing:

Any colors can be marbleized. To the left is a black and white marbling and you can also add a third color as well. Just mix up two colors until the colors are blended but still separate.

It is important to stop mixing before the two colors blend into a third color. For example, if I kept mixing the clay I used in this necklace, it would have eventually turned gray. I stopped while it was still white and black.

How to Make Faux Turquoise:

To the right is a video link to see how to make faux turquoise. I teach a very simple technique geared for beginners and once you get this technique down pat, you can certainly research other methods on the internet. There are as many ways to make faux turquoise as there are different types of real turquoise.



Using Push Molds:

During the video, you will see me demonstrating with a plaster heart push mold. They are very common these days, but the only question is how to get the clay out of the mold once you put it in. It's very simple.

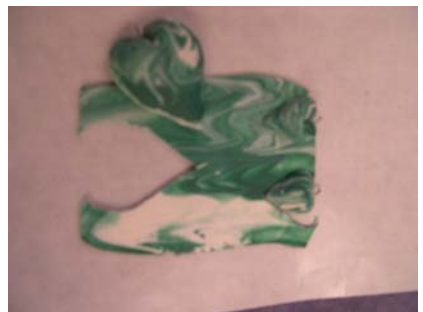
Before filling the mold, spray the inside with a little water. Press in your clay and spread to fill in the mold. Once the mold is filled and level on top, roll up another ball of clay and press it against the clay in the mold. The ball of clay will attach itself to the back of the new shape and lift it out of the mold. Because the mold is stable, it will maintain it's exact shape and all of its detail.



Making a Clay Backing:

Almost all of the pendant shapes are created with push molds or build up one step at a time onto a clay backing. In order to add and secure a hanging wire, I will demonstrate on live video how to make a clay backing for one of our projects. This will be the most common technique used in many of the pendants, earrings and brooches. This technique will allow you to attach your pieces in more elaborate designs. The video link is to the right and the written instructions are as follows:

1. Roll out a thin clay slab, the second to largest setting on the pasta machine. If you are doing it by rolling pin, make it construction paper thin.
2. Slice the clay straight across, creating a straight edge.
3. Twist up a hanging wire and embed it into the clay.
4. Apply the clay heart (made with a push mold) onto the top of the clay backing, making sure to embed the wire in the center. The twisted wire will catch into the clay and will be more secure when baked than if you have a straight wire.
5. Using your xacto knife, cut out the heart from the clay backing and smooth the sides to erase any connection lines.
6. The heart pendant is now ready to add to a necklace design.



The clay backing and hanging wire can be altered for any particular design as shown in these three photos.

Basic Beads



All of the jewelry pieces have beads. Most of the beads are made from polymer clay, but occasionally, there is a design that contains commercial beads that you can pick up at any local craft store.



The beads are made from polymer clay and couldn't be easier to make. If you are an absolute beginner and need to see simple beads made, there is another short video showing how easy they are.

If you are already familiar with polymer clay beads, I will describe it, with an additional tip or two, just as a refresher:



The most important aspect of creating professional-looking beads is correct sizing. It is important that the beads are the same size and shape. The easiest and most efficient way of creating identical beads is to roll out one long log of clay that is completely even from one end to the other. Using a ruler, make evenly spaced cutting lines across the log and when you are sure they are evenly spaced, slice them off from the log.



Using the same sized wire that you will be ultimately stringing with, poke a hole through each bead individually, making sure to wiggle the wire to assure you have extra space if you will be using a needle.



Start out making either round beads or rice shaped beads as shown in the third picture on the left.

Once you have all of your beads made up, lay them out on a paper beading tray (video link to the left) and bake according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Once cool, you are ready for the design and stringing steps.

Stringing Basics



Each of the individual projects will have pictures that will be self-explanatory about how each of the jewelry pieces is strung. However, I will just cover the basics in this general stringing category.

Stringing on Fishing Line:

My favorite stringing material is 15 pound fishing line because you do not need a needle, you do not need magnifying glasses, and it is very inexpensive and one roll will keep you beading for a long time. The second favorite is Tiger tail which is similar in benefits, but it comes in very small packages and I seem to always run out.

If you are just starting out with only the fewest supplies, you can tie on the necklace closure finding and knot the fishing line and thread the end through the first few beads. However, if you want the most polished and professional looking jewelry, it is best to use a crimper and crimping beads.

To Crimp: Add one crimper bead. Thread the line through one side of the necklace closure and back through the crimper bead. With your crimper tool, squeeze in the middle gully of the crimper tool. Then turn the now-flattened crimper bead and squeeze in the first gully which then folds the flattened crimper bead for a very tight and secure attachment. Add the rest of the beads per your design.

After your last design bead, add another crimper bead, loop the line through the other side of the necklace closure loop, back through the crimper bead. Before crimping, pull up and check the necklace for any slack in your fishing line, tighten and double-crimp that crimp bead, thread your end through a few beads and clip off. Your necklace is finished.

Stringing and Knotting onto nylon or cotton cording.

The necklace to the right is strung on cotton cording. This design can be used with any type of pendant and matching beads.

Cut a 2 yard piece of cording and tape the ends with scotch tape as shown in the second picture to the right.

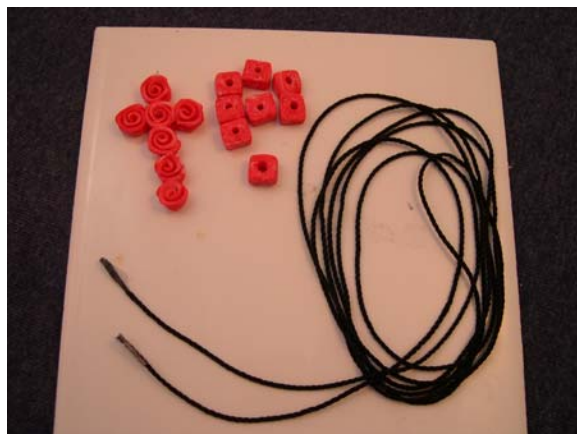
Make up your pendant and matching beads, making sure the beading hole is large enough for the cording to go through. You will need at least one bead that the cording can go through twice. Use a toothpick to poke the holes in your beads.

Thread the long cording through the pendant and tie a knot. Thread both cords through one bead and tie another knot.

Then knot, bead and knot every 1.5 inches along the cord.

Once your pendant is done, you will be left with two raw ends of the cording. Take matching polymer clay and embed the cording into the clay and form another bead at the end of each cord.

There is a video below showing how to make a macramé slide knot so you can wear the pendant at any length on your body. This will come in handy. Part 1 and Part 2



Designing the Necklace:

1. First decide where you want the necklace to lay on the body, either choker length, high chest, mid-chest or pendant length. Measure, if necessary.
2. Next choose the main color and complementary color. Decide whether you will be making all elements or whether you will be adding any commercial beads or other elements.
3. Choose your metal color, if applicable: Silver, gold, copper, etc.
4. Let's design a necklace to start: Using either a bead board or a measured long strip of accordion –folded paper, visually divide the necklace into three separate sections: middle focal point, and two sides.

By breaking up the design into three equal sections, it will be easier to decide how to fill the space and how to keep things symmetrical.

5. Start your design in the center and add a focal bead or beads. Design and lay out your polymer clay beads and any commercial beads symmetrically on each side of your focal arrangement. Decide on what type of closure and stringing material you will use. Add the closure onto the board or paper tray.
6. Once you have all of the clay elements you will need molded and formed, bake them according to the manufacturer's instructions. Allow to cool. Coat with a satin or gloss finish, if desired.
7. Put your design back on the board and string from one side, to the other.





Making Earrings

Making long beaded drop earrings couldn't be easier. Make up different beads, either by hand or with a push mold, mix with some commercial beads and string onto a long head pin or a looped wire. Attach to the earring wire and you are done.





Red Floral & Gold Embellished Necklace with matching Green Leaf Earrings

Pendant:

Roll out a black clay backing and embed three hanging hooks or jump rings. Cover with green leaves and red flowers on top. Add either a 6 mm faux pearl or make a white polymer pearl and add on the middle of your flower.

Decorative Matching Element Bead:

Roll up a ball of black clay and flatten into a disk. Add connection wires on each side. Add the same leaf, flower and pearl design on the top.

Pendant Hanger:

Link a teardrop shape bead onto a rose shaped bead and attach to the center focal pendant.

Bead Crown End Beads:

Open the spokes of a bead crown. Roll up a polymer clay bead and fit into the spokes of the crown. Into one end of the bead, insert the nylon cord end and secure around the bead. Remove the bead from the crown end cap and bake the beads. When cool, glue together with a strong jewelry glue.



To Use a Push Mold or Not Use a Push Mold?



If you are creating one of a kind jewelry and will be creating only a few shapes per item, it is really not necessary to use a push mold or make a push mold. Most of the shapes in White Gothic Jewelry designs, as well as other original jewelry designs, are usually simple enough to make from scratch. If the shapes vary slightly from one another, it will only add to the home-made look of the overall piece.

However, if you will be making several pieces of jewelry, and/or want a more professional look, it is important that your shapes are as consistent as possible. Molds, therefore, are essential, whether they are purchased or made.

Molds are also helpful if you have limited hobby time and want to spend your time and energy in designing and not recreating the wheel each time you sit down.



The two projects to the left were both made using simple plaster push molds. They both required the same amount of time to create the focal pieces, about 2 minutes, because of the magic of push molds.

If you are considering your own line of jewelry, you will need to

use push molds, as consistence of shape is crucial in commercial jewelry design.

Push Molds can be made with very little effort. To make a plaster push mold, simply make up your shape, secure it into the bottom of a plastic cup or throw-away old butter tub, and cover with plaster. Be sure you do not have any undercuts in your design. Most simple shapes should be okay. Allow the plaster to dry and remove your master and you are ready to go.

There are many other products that you can use to make push molds. They have many silicone materials that are either mixable or pour able or brush-able. If you search silicone mold making on Google, you will see lots and lots of choices.



These are a few of the mold making products that are available at most larger arts and crafts store. They are also available online as well.

Next I will describe simple push mold making using Sculpey Mold Maker. This is the easiest and most available and cost effective product out there.

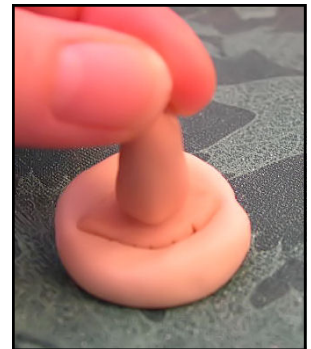


Making a Push Mold with Moldmaker

Supplies:

Moldmaker

1. For our example project, we will be making a leaf push mold. Create a small leaf shape, as shown in the picture to the right. Using the back of your Xacto knife or dental tool, score in vein lines.
2. Following the manufacturer's instructions, bake the leaf and allow to cool
3. Apply a little Liquid Sculpey to the back of the leaf and add a small log of clay, creating a handle for your leaf. Re-bake according to manufacturer's instructions.
4. Roll out a ball of Mold Maker, slightly larger than your leaf. Holding the leaf stamp directly overhead, evenly depress your leaf into the Moldmaker and remove straight up. Bake your new Moldmaker Push Mold according to the manufacturer's instructions.
5. Once cool, your new push mold is ready to use. You can use either Armoral or a light spray of water as a release agent.
6. The push mold is slightly flexible. Easy, isn't it?



Now that you have learned your basic techniques, you are ready to learn how to make lots and lots of different designs for any length of necklace, bracelet, brooch and/or earrings. These basic skills will allow you not only to design your own original designs, it will also help you to incorporate designs you see on commercial pieces into your own creations.

Once you have learned how to make faux jade and faux turquoise, that process will also enable you to look at other natural stones and figure out how to make them. You will be able to calculate how much translucent clay to colored clay and what type of manipulation you will need to mimic it. These are the very basics. Everything you learn will be built upon these simple techniques.

The basic necklace design formula that was covered here will only need to be tweaked and adjusted to make thousands of designs. You will always begin with a focal point, be it one bead or a bead link. Next you will design the side areas, choose a stringing material and closure method. All necklaces incorporate these basic design techniques.

By learning to blend and leach your clay, you now know how to overcome any problems that occur because of the clay. If your clay is too soft, leach the clay. If it is too hard, you can mix in a little translucent clay or even some Mold Maker to soften it up. Once you have mastered how to manipulate the polymer clay, you will be able to use any brand of clay and you will be the master of it, not vice versa.

Of all the techniques I have learned along the way, I think my favorite is the macramé slide. I saw it demonstrated on the old Carol Duval Show and it has enabled me to create necklaces that can be worn with many different necklines. It also works wonderfully with pendants.



Still excited? Be sure to see a free You Tube video tutorial on how to make the Valentine Angel Heart Pendant:

Part 1

Part 2

I hope you enjoyed the course. You are ready now to take any of the other courses offered.