

Toothpick beads – A beginner metal clay project - by Jennifer Tough

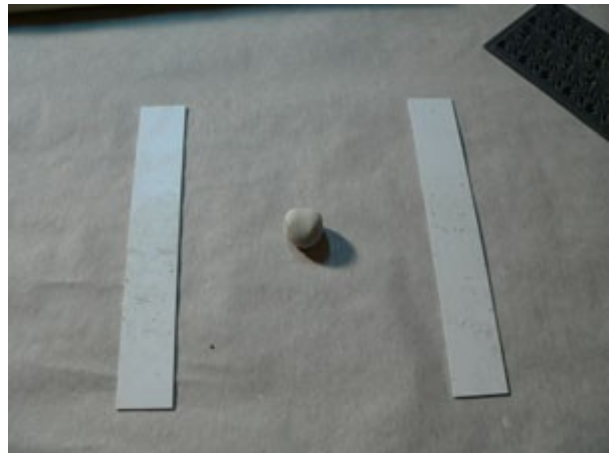
These beads make a great first project. They're fun, simple, and fairly quick. You will learn how to roll out your clay, and add texture. The tools are fairly simple, most of which you will probably already have in your collection of craft supplies. I will discuss firing options at the end of this tutorial.



Step 1:

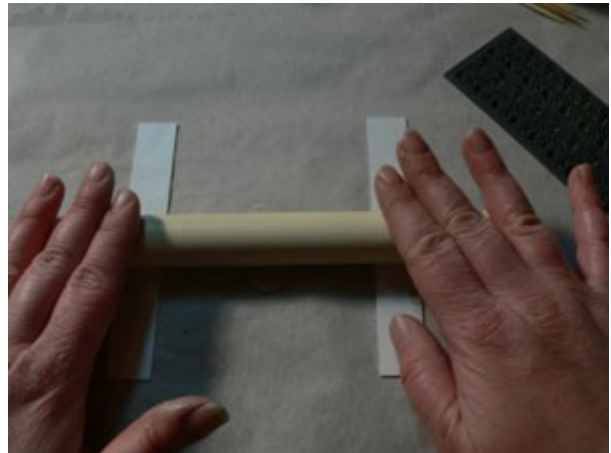
Prepare the following:

- 1 or 2 20 gram packs of Art Clay Silver™
- 1 container of Art Clay Silver™ paste (very little is needed)
- A piece of parchment paper as a work surface.
- 2 plastic strips (or 2 stacks of 3 playing cards)
- A plastic roller.
- A rubber stamp, or a piece of fabric with a nice texture.
- toothpicks
- Paintbrush
- Clay cutter, or a template made on card stock
- An exacto knife if using card stock as a template
- Sandpaper (see our art clay product page)
- Metal files (our tool kit includes these)
- A teeny bit of olive oil.



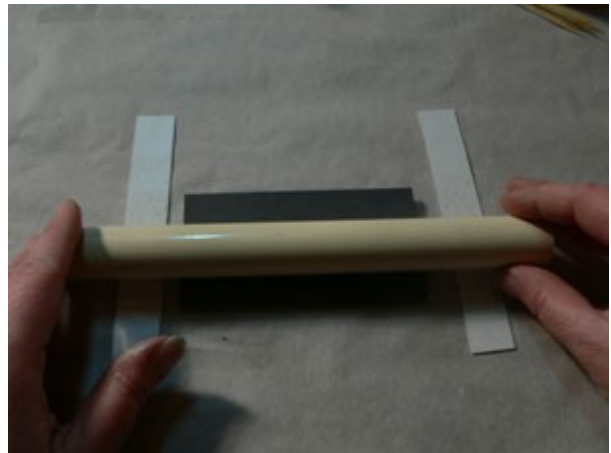
Step 2:

Open your package of clay, and break off about half the clay. Carefully wrap the remaining clay and put it back in the package to prevent the clay drying out. Metal clay will dry out quickly exposed to air. Place the ball of clay in between the two plastic strips, and use your roller to roll out the clay flat.



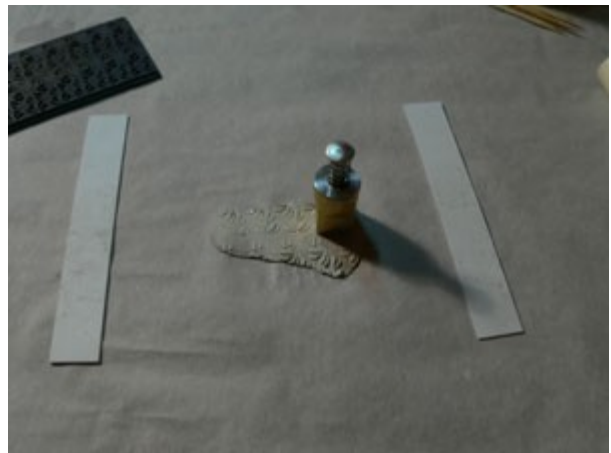
Step 3:

If you are using a rubber stamp, rub a little bit of olive oil over the stamp to prevent the clay from sticking. Place your texture on top of the clay, and roll over the texture to make a nice deep impression.



Step 4:

Use your clay or small cookie cutters to cut out at least two shapes. You will need 2 pieces for each bead.



Step 5:

Carefully wrap up any remaining clay with the leftovers from step 2.



Step 6:

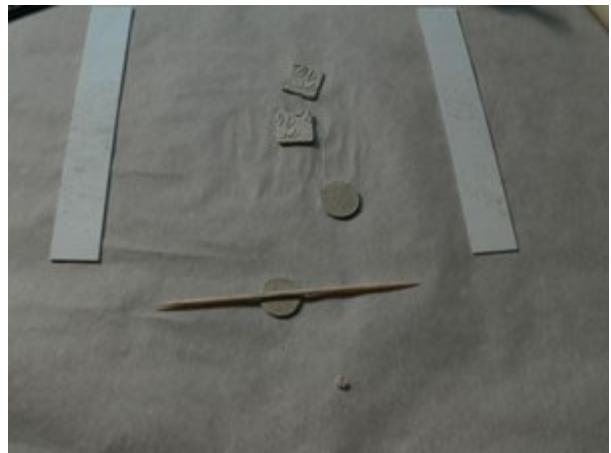
Open your paste jar, and with your paintbrush, paint the back of each cutout with a layer of paste. It doesn't need to be thick.

Lump clay does not stick to itself, you need the paste to adhere the two halves of the beads together.



Step 7:

With both halves painted with the paste, carefully place a toothpick in the dead centre of one of your cutouts.



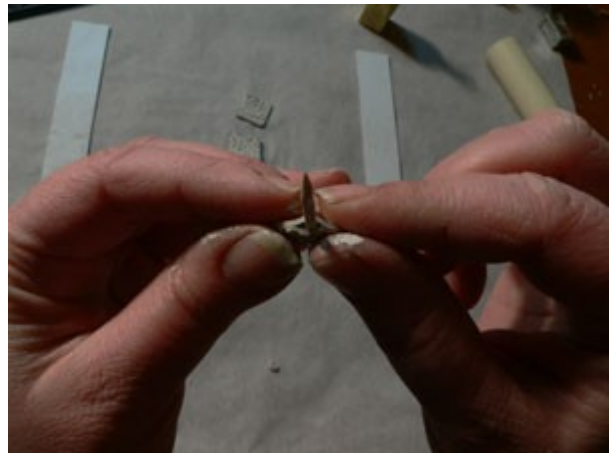
Step 8:

Place the second cutout on top of the toothpick, and arrange so that your edges line up.



Step 9:

Carefully squeeze the two halves together. Try to squeeze as close to the toothpick as possible. The toothpick will be your bead hole.

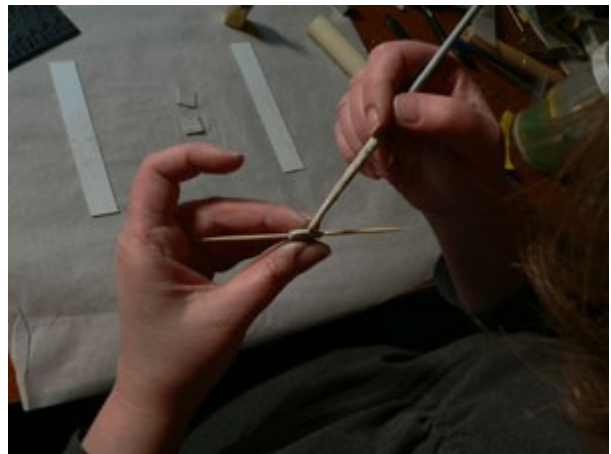


Step 10:

Using your paste, brush on a layer of paste around the edges of your bead. Allow to dry.

Once dry, carefully remove the toothpick.

Using your metal files, file down the edges to remove any bumps. Use your sandpaper as a final step to ensure that all edges are completely smooth. Any bumps or nicks will be even more noticeable after firing.



A final note on firing:

In this project I used Art Clay Silver™ – Low Fire. This needs to be fired at a minimum of 1200°F. I like to kiln fire at about 1400 for 2 hours for additional strength. You can also fire with a torch. For complete firing instructions please see the Art Clay World website: <http://www.artclayworld.com/faq.html>

