

OVER THE RAINBOW –

How to Condition Polymer Clay

Different brands and even batches within brands of Polymer Clay vary with how much conditioning they need before using. However, never use Polymer clay straight from the packet without first conditioning until the clay is soft and smooth.

What is conditioning?

Conditioning is the process that makes polymer clay ready to work with. Conditioning your polymer clay before you use it is necessary and a very important step. It also mixes the ingredients more evenly and removes air which may be trapped in the clay during manufacturing.

How to condition your clay

If you are conditioning your clay by hand try cutting the block into small pieces using a clay blade, rolling the clay into a ball. Then into a snake, folding it up and keep repeating until the clay can be folded easily without cracking or breaking. It should be supple, flexible and smooth.

If you use large quantities of clay, consider investing in a pasta machine to condition your clay. You can slice your clay into thin slices and pass it through the pasta machine. Then fold in half, keep folding and passing through the machine until it is soft and conditioned. It's a good idea to always pass it through with the fold first or on the side of the piece, not at the back of the piece as that can sometimes cause air to become caught in the clay.

What if your clay is too soft?

Sometimes clay may become too soft, in which case you let it sit for a while to firm up, or put in the refrigerator. If your clay is far too soft roll it into a sheet and place between two layers of absorbent baking paper with a heavy book on top to leach out some of the plasticisers (overnight is best).

What if your clay is too hard?

We suggest you soften really hard unbaked polymer clay by working it and adding a softening agent like Sculpey Clay Softener, Fimo Mix Quick or Liquid Polymer Clay to it. Either chop up or crumble your hard Polymer clay, then follow the manufacturers instructions on the packs. Keep working it and be patient.

Storing your Polymer Clay

When storing Polymer clay its very important that you keep it away from heat that can lead to it becoming cured or hardened. You can store it in wads or balls in a plastic container or a partitioned plastic box. Plastic sandwich bags also work well and you can keep the colours separate. Maybe roll it into sheets using the pasta machine and store flat in layers in a drawer

with backing paper between each layer. When you go to use it again, it takes just a few passes through the pasta machine to re-condition it again.