



## Basic Metal Clay Tools

### **If you're a metal clay beginner, you will need:**

- a non-stick work surface such as our [teflon sheets](#), [acrylic underlay](#) or [Art Clay worksheet](#).
- a plastic roller like our [economy roller](#) or [clear acrylic roller](#).
- playing cards, [spacer bars](#), or [rolling frames](#).
- a non-stick solution such as [badger balm](#) or a little olive oil.
- a couple of small pots for water
- a paintbrush
- a scalpel or [cutting tool](#)
- some [sanding pads](#)
- some [metal clay](#)
- firing equipment; either a [kiln](#), a [blow torch & fibre brick](#) or a [stainless steel mesh](#) to place on top of a hob.

We recommend purchasing our [Art Clay Basic Kit](#) which includes all the essential tools to get started + a 10% discount on silver clay and on additional tools.

### **A few of our other favourites tools:**

[Clay shapers](#) are perfect for using with your Art Clay. They come with differently shaped and sized silicone tips. We use them all the time - to even out edges, smooth out joints and surfaces, poke stones in place and for all sorts of stuff!

[Texture tiles and mats](#) are ideal for creating surface patterns, shapes to cut out and to decorate your pieces with. Spray the texture with a little [Cool Slip](#) or olive oil to stop the clay from sticking.

As beautiful as they are, you don't have to just use commercial textures and stamps; have a look around you and you'll start finding loads of interesting surfaces, textures, patterns and shapes you can use with your clay. Look at leaves, fabric, paper, lace, bark, shells, corals, tools, cutlery, combs - once you start looking you'll find some fabulous things for free!

And - don't forget you can make your own. Using [Imagepac Stamp Making Kit](#) you can easily make your own rubber stamps from photos, writing, drawings - all your own designs! You can also easily create your own textures with a [V-shaped carving tool](#) and the [Flexi-Carve Silicone Carving Sheets](#) or [rubber sheet](#).

Get a metal clay work surface or a piece of acrylic, glass or stone to work on. Teflon and [TUFF cards](#) and sheets are excellent but check that they won't give your work a slight pattern - there are super smooth ones available. Good quality baking papers with teflon coating also work, but they can crinkle when they get wet. Make sure your work surface is non-absorbent. If you are going to use a roller, you can cover your

piece with another sheet of baking paper before rolling it, to stop the clay from sticking. Much easier than using olive oil on your tools! It will also help to stop the clay from drying out too fast.

To roll out flat sheets of clay you need a roller and spacers. This ensures you get an even thickness across the sheet, and that it isn't too thin. You simply place the spacers on each side of the clay, and use the roller like a normal rolling pin. You can make do with stacks of playing cards as spacers when you start up. You want your clay to be a minimum of 1mm.

If your hands are very dry or hot, rinse them in cool water and rub in a few drops of olive oil, a little Badger Balm, Slik, or a similar product, whilst your hands are still a little wet. This will stop your dry skin from drying out the clay.

We think a sharp scalpel, craft knife, or needle tool is vital! Check out this surgical version with replaceable blades. We use this to cut out little shapes, tidy up edges on dry clay, cut out fretwork, carve designs on dry clay, and so on. Make sure the blade is sharp, and change it if you notice that it starts to 'pull' the clay.

Needle files are perfect for re-shaping and adjusting your pieces before (and after) firing. Do take the time to finish your piece carefully before firing. This is much easier than doing it when the Art Clay has changed into its metal form, and it creates a much more professional looking finish.

Start with files, and finish off with sanding sponges or fine abrasive paper. Sanding sponges are a MUST in your tool kit! Be careful and gentle as the clay is fragile in its plaster-like state. Use a rubber block to support your piece and stop it slipping.

After firing you need to polish up your silver. You can do this in many different ways, depending on the finish you're after.

To start with, you need a brass or stainless steel brush. Just brush over the surface to smooth it down. A brass brush gives you a lovely satin sheen, whilst a steel brush gives a more scratched look.

For a higher shine on small areas, go over them with a burnisher. Just rub firmly over the surface, this compresses the silver and gives it a nice sparkle. It is great fun, but only use it on smaller areas. If you use this technique on a large un-textured surface, it will leave little tell-tale lines and marks. For larger areas, use polishing papers or sanding sponges for a mirror finish.

You can also always use a trusty tumbler or the JoolTool to polish your pieces! These machines are a bit more heavy duty for when you start making numerous pieces at a time. If you're just starting out, you can achieve the same mirror-shine by hand polishing.

If you have any questions at all or are searching for a specific tool or product - please feel free to give us a call at 01929 554771 or email [support@metalclay.co.uk](mailto:support@metalclay.co.uk)

Happy Making!

*The Metal Clay Team x*