

Art Press Tools

Make your own plaster tools for impressions and textures

Create simple tools for stamping image impressions, creating raised designs and adding textures to a variety of artworks. They can be pressed into clay prior to kiln firing, polymer clay before baking and air-dry clay while still moist. Tools can also be used for creating patterns in metal foil or making texture rubbings on paper. These tools can be kept in the classroom and used over and over in a variety of projects. With proper care and handling, they will last for years.

Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Plaster Press Tools

Grade Levels K-12

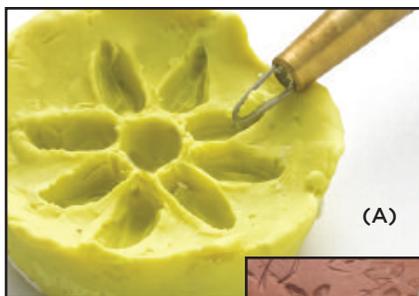
Process

1. Use white, oil-based, non-drying modeling clay to make a mold. Place a 2" dia. ball of clay in a small paper cup. Flatten it on the bottom and bring it up slightly on the sides to form a shallow well (this will make a rounded dome on the tool that will not interfere with impressions).
2. To make a tool for stamping impressions, use a small "loop" clay tool or mini wooden tools to carve a design into the clay (see A). This type of tool will stamp the same design that you make, so there is no need to reverse.

HINTS:

- Don't carve lines less than 1/16" wide (about the width of a piece of cooked spaghetti). Thinner lines will not cast as well and will be more brittle.
- Try to carve all lines to a similar depth.

To create a tool that makes relief (raised) designs, take a small amount of the remaining modeling clay and build the shape on top of the clay in the cup. Use a small clay tool to press it down on the edges to keep it in place (see B).



Carve the design into the modeling clay for a tool that makes impressions



Build a design up from the modeling clay for a tool that makes raised prints



Materials

for Plaster Press Tools

[Blick Pottery Plaster No. 1](#) (33536-1045) one 4-1/2"-lb box will make enough for 25 paper cup castings

[Van Aken® Plastilina Oil-Based Modeling Clay](#), 1-lb block white (33268-1041), need two blocks for 25 paper cup castings (may be reused)

[Kemper Wire Loop Sgraffito Tool](#) (30317-1063), share one between two students

[Mini Modeling Tools](#), 10-tool set (30354-1010), need three sets to share across classroom

Paper cups, small size

Mixing bowl, tablespoon, craft stick for mixing plaster

Process (continued)

Again, there is no need to reverse the design.

- To cast the tool, scoop 3 heaping tablespoons plaster in a separate cup. Add 2 tablespoons water and stir with a craft stick. If needed, add more water until plaster is the consistency of soft-serve ice cream. It should stick to the craft stick without dripping when lifted out of the cup. Rotate the cup gently while tapping the sides to release air bubbles. Dry at least 40 minutes.

- Tear the cup away and remove clay. If clay sticks in the plaster, remove with a small modeling tool. Clay may be reused. Smooth away rough edges and uneven areas on the top of the tool with sandpaper. Allow 24 hours for complete cure before using the tool.



Once plaster is dry, tear away cup and removed modeling clay

Options

- Larger texture plates can be made using the same process in a foam bowl, see example at right, foam tray or aluminum foil pan. Line a cardboard box with plastic wrap and adjust modeling clay and plaster amounts to fill.

- Create a signature tool to uniformly mark pottery pieces or create your own watermark on paper



To Clean the Tool:

- For air-drying clay, allow to dry and brush away with a bristle brush or toothbrush. Tool may also be cleaned with a damp paper towel, a moistened cotton swab or a wooden stylus (14907-1045) Do not soak tool with water or use a sharp object to clean.

Suggested Applications

- Press textures and patterns into any pottery, polymer or air-dry clay.



- Emboss metal tooling foil by placing the metal over the design and burnishing with fingers or a blunt, rounded tool, see example above. Turn metal over and “chase” the embossed texture by tracing around it with a blunt, rounded tool. Recommended materials: 38 gauge foil in Copper (60504-8125) or Gold (60504-4050) and Ten Seconds Studio Basic Tool Set (60516-1001)

- Lay paper over the tool and burnish with a crayon or pencil to pick up the texture beneath, see example at right.



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National Standards

Content Standard #1 – Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

K-4

Students use art materials and tools in a safe and responsible manner

5-8

Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

9-12

Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use