

Focus on...

# Metal clay

We ask four metal clay designers their top tips!

In this issue we feature tips on working with metal clay from four top designers who provide their expert opinion. So if you are just starting out, check it out before you get going!



**JULIA  
RAI**

- ▶ A cocktail stick is rough enough to sand dry clay and gets into small areas.
- ▶ Flatten your clay into a pancake before rehydrating the clay with a wet finger.
- ▶ Use well-hydrated lumps of clay to fill gaps in your work rather than paste.
- ▶ Mould odd scraps of paper-type metal clay into small balls for embellishment.
- ▶ Never underestimate the power of the wet finger to smooth surface cracks or edges.



**EMMA  
GORDON**



- ▶ Keep clay moist by wrapping in clingfilm and storing in an airtight container with a small piece of wet sponge.
- ▶ Have a look in your local DIY store; you can often find great tools at cheaper prices or find wallpaper samples that would make great textures.



**CANDY  
CHAPPELL**

- ▶ Make use of storage pots so nothing is wasted. Everything can be saved and re-used.
- ▶ When making rings, keep a shrinkage record. This really helps to get the right size every time.
- ▶ If you are on a budget, try adding other elements such as resin and polymer to help your clay go further.



PHOTOGRAPH: LAUREL GUILFOYLE

- ▶ A sewing needle makes a great makeshift needle tool for cutting out template shapes.
- ▶ Emery boards make a great tool for sanding straight edges quickly.
- ▶ If you want a high polish on a piece, use an agate burnisher to burnish before firing.

- ▶ Always make a mock up in polymer clay first; test textures, sizes, cutters, etc.
- ▶ Be careful of cross-contamination when working with different metal clays. Keep all tools clean and use separate sanding pads and files.



PHOTOGRAPH: TRACEY SPURGIN



**TRACEY  
SPURGIN**

- ▶ Think the steps and the process through first. Be prepared by having all your tools clean and ready to hand.
- ▶ Lightly lubricate a work surface and tools with a little badger balm or olive oil (not Vaseline).
- ▶ Don't open the packet and play with clay; it will not tolerate this.
- ▶ Have a clear design in mind and try out your ideas in polymer clay first.
- ▶ Quickly condition the clay after opening by rolling it fast and hard in the heel of your hands. Bring the clay to a soft putty ball, with no cracks or fold lines.



PHOTOGRAPH: CANDY CHAPPELL



PHOTOGRAPH: LAUREL GUILFOYLE