

Air Dry Clay - How to Color Air Dry Clay

Pigments recommended - red, yellow, blue, black color. With these 4 basic colors you can create myriad of colors.

For example, if you mix yellow and blue, you'll have green clay color. You'll have purple color by mixing red and blue and orange color by mixing red and yellow.

Air dry clay is a great way to sculpt without dealing with a kiln or oven but coloring it can be a little more complicated. Depending on the method you choose, you can add designs and color to clay before or after you dry it. Learning how to color clay before modeling, draw with a marker on dried clay, or paint designs on dried clay will help bring your creations to life

Coloring Before Drying - White air-dry clay will give you the best results. Check to make sure your clay isn't colored. Even off-white clay will affect the final color. Even if you're using white clay, always test a small piece first, to determine how the color will work and to get the hue you're after.

Choose your colorant. If you want your clay to be a single solid color, dyeing it with pigment before it dries will get you the results you need. There are many options for pre-coloring air dry clay, so feel free to experiment!

- Acrylic, tempera, or poster paints will give you a solid bright color.
- Oil paints will also work for basic coloring, but they're harder to clean.
- If you want a deep, vivid color, try artists' quality acrylic or oil paint.
- Food coloring or icing coloring will give similar results as acrylic and tempera.
- If you want a pastel or very light color, try pastel chalk.

You can also buy readymade clay colorants, but they come in limited colors and can be expensive.

Set up your work surface. Dyeing clay can be messy. Make sure your hands and your work surface are protected from staining. Only work on disposable or washable surfaces, like a sheet of wax paper over a counter or a plastic cutting board. Wear plastic or rubber gloves, especially if you're working with oil paint or food coloring. Disposable gloves are best.

Knead the clay before adding colorant. Spend some time kneading and pressing the clay with your hands before you add the colorant. This will help it soften so it can absorb the color more quickly and evenly. Kneading means to repeatedly press your fingers into the clay. The time you spend kneading will depend on the temperature and altitude you're at, but it shouldn't take more than 5 minutes. You'll know it's done when the color is distributed evenly all through the clay.

Add a small drop of colorant to the clay and knead it in. Knead the colorant into the clay until the entire piece is colored evenly. This may take up to 5 minutes, so don't be worried if it doesn't change colors right away!

If you are using a solid colorant like pastel chalk, add a little bit of dust to the clay

Continue adding one drop of colorant until the clay is the color you want. Be careful adding additional colorant--you shouldn't add more than a drop at a time. Be sure to knead the clay thoroughly after each drop!

Sculpt and dry as usual. After you've got the color you want, you can continue working with your clay. Dyed clay often dries faster than undyed clay, so you may need to work a little more quickly than usual.