

# How to Make Polymer Clay Beads

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July 5, 2024



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*Making Polymer Clay Beads Supplies*

Learn [how to make polymer clay earrings](#), and get all the beginner basics in my [polymer clay tutorial](#).

## Make Polymer Clay Beads, Step by Step

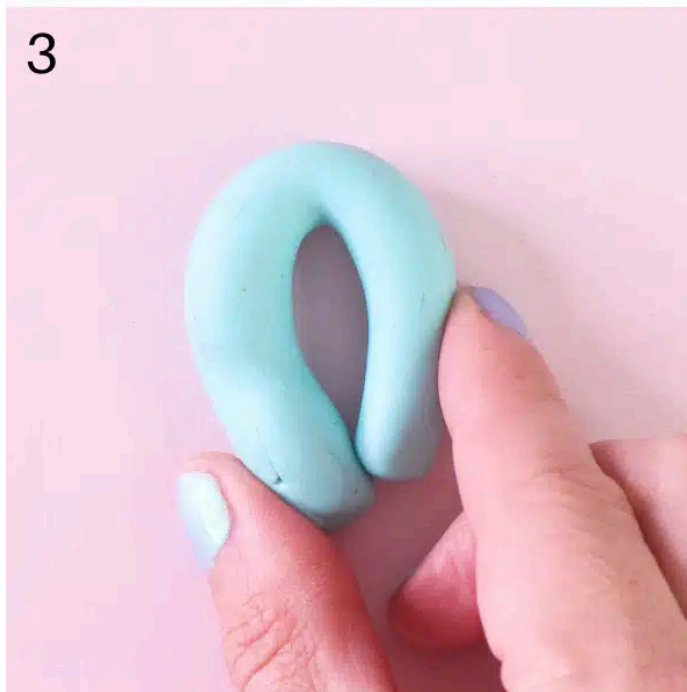
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### Step 1 - Preparation and Conditioning

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First, prepare your work surface. Polymer clay is extremely sensitive to dirt and surface roughness. Use a sheet of standard, clean white paper to line your workspace. Paper is slick, dirt-free, and simple to replace when it becomes covered in clay!

Next, [soften the polymer clay](#) - this is called conditioning. Rub the clay pieces between your palms to work the clay. Keep rubbing, rolling, and squashing the clay until it feels soft and easy to shape. When clay is softened or conditioned, it is warmed, cracks are smoothed out, and the clay becomes easier to shape and more manageable.



Softening Polymer Clay

## Step 2 - Marbling Clay Beads (Optional)

While you are conditioning the clay, you can create a marbled effect for your beads at the same time.

- Roll small ropes of each color that you want to combine in your marbled effect.
- Twist these ropes together.
- Then roll the whole twisted rope to smooth it out.
- Cut off even pieces for the beads. (More detail about that later!)

- Roll each piece again to make a smaller rope and twist it to blend the colors even further.
- Then proceed with making each bead.



How to Make Polymer Clay Beads with Marbling Effects

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## Step 3 - Making Polymer Clay Beads (10 Ways)

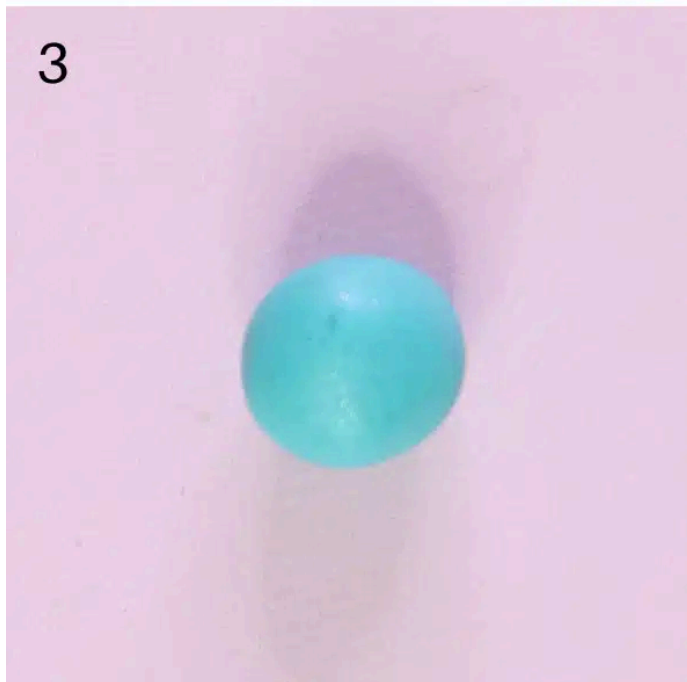
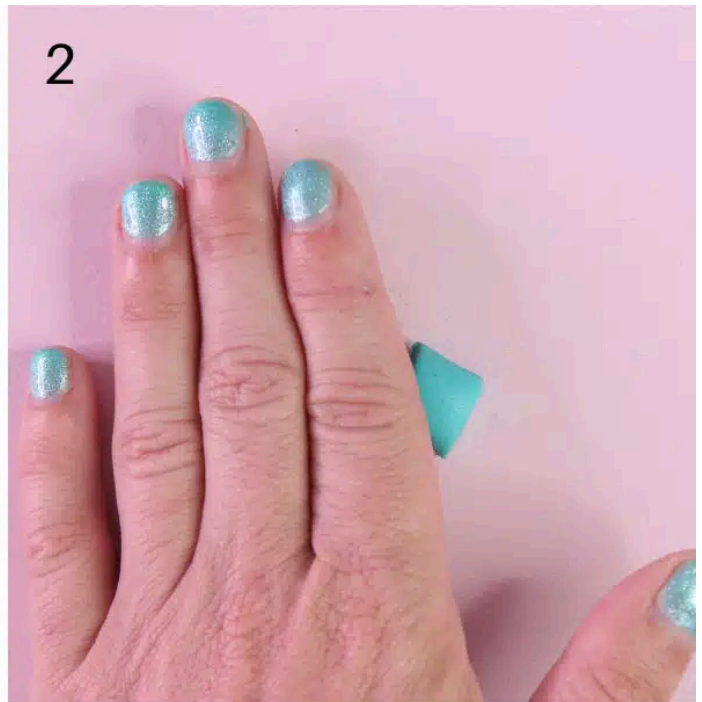
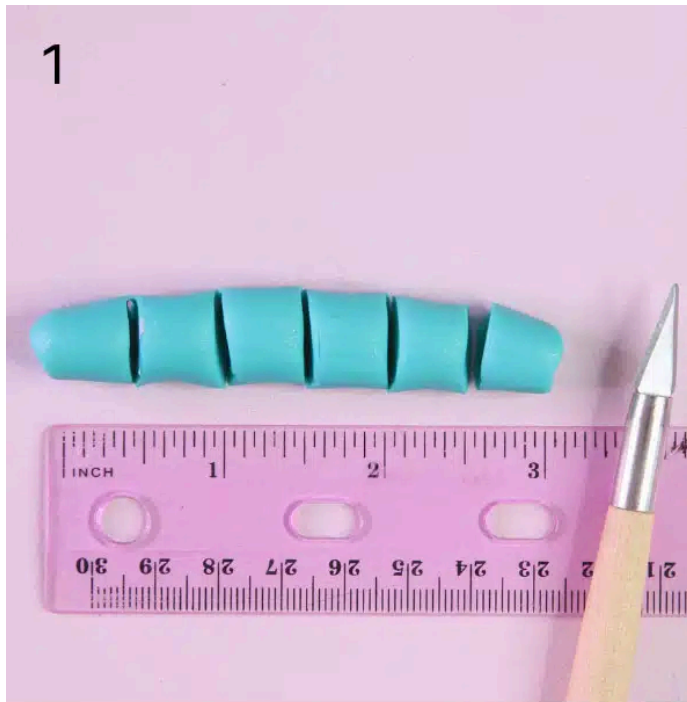
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### 1. Polymer Clay Beads that are Round

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A round polymer clay bead is the simplest type to make. Decide on the color or colors you want for your beads. If you want marbled beads, follow the instructions above while conditioning the clay.

1. Once the clay is conditioned, roll an even “log” of clay. The log must be the diameter of the beads you want to make. Cut the log into equal lengths of the same measurement. So, if your log is  $\frac{1}{2}$ ” (12mm) wide, cut it up into lengths of  $\frac{1}{2}$ ” (12mm). This will give you a bead of approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$ ” (12mm) in diameter. Place a ruler next to your log of clay to get all the beads the same size.
2. The next step is to place one of your cut pieces in your palm and cover it with the palm of your other hand. Rotate the top hand in a circular motion.
3. Roll the small piece around in your hands until it becomes perfectly spherical. Some people prefer to do this rolling on their work surface, using only one hand to roll.
4. Place the sphere onto your work surface and push a darning needle, awl toothpick, or skewer through the ball. Choose whichever will make the size of the hole that you require. Lift the ball on the needle and hold it lightly in your other hand. Be careful not to squash it and lose the round shape! Push the needle/skewer all the way through the bead. If your bead has become slightly distorted from the piercing, roll it again, gently, still with the needle/skewer inside it to prevent the hole from closing up.



How to Make Polymer Clay Beads that are Round

## 2. How to Make Polymer Clay Discs

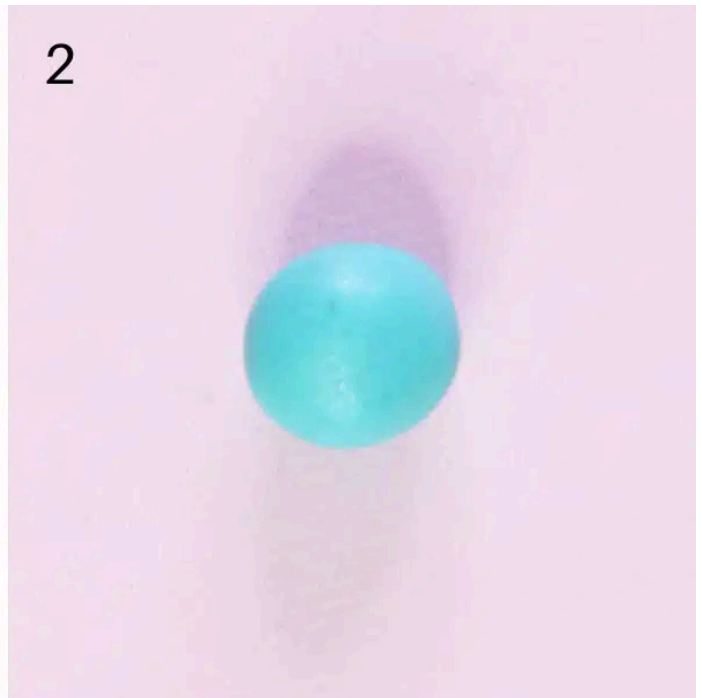
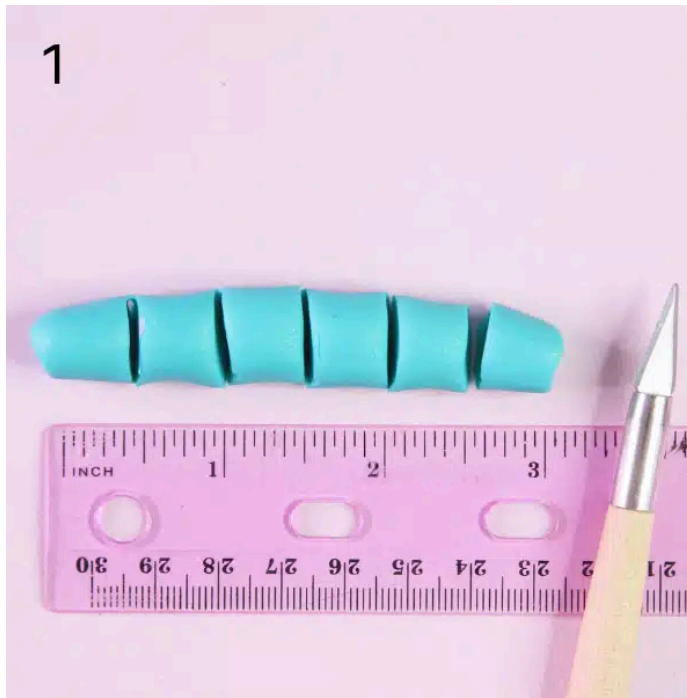
You can turn your round beads into discs by flattening the spheres before you add the holes. Simply squash on a flat surface.

## 3. Square Polymer Clay Beads

To make square beads, you will follow the same procedure given above (in the round beads section) of conditioning the clay, rolling it into a “log”, and cutting the log into same-size pieces.

The next step will be to squeeze this small piece between your thumb and forefinger to flatten it. Then turn the clay and squeeze again, and turn and squeeze again until you have formed a six-sided shape, like a dice. Your edges will be slightly rounded.

If you want your square bead to be less rounded and organically shaped, and more precisely, a cube, once you have formed the basic cube shape with your fingers, gently press it onto your work surface with your thumb. Keep turning and repeat for all six sides. This will give you slightly sharper corners.



How to Make a Square Polymer Clay Bead

#### 4. How to Make Oblong Beads

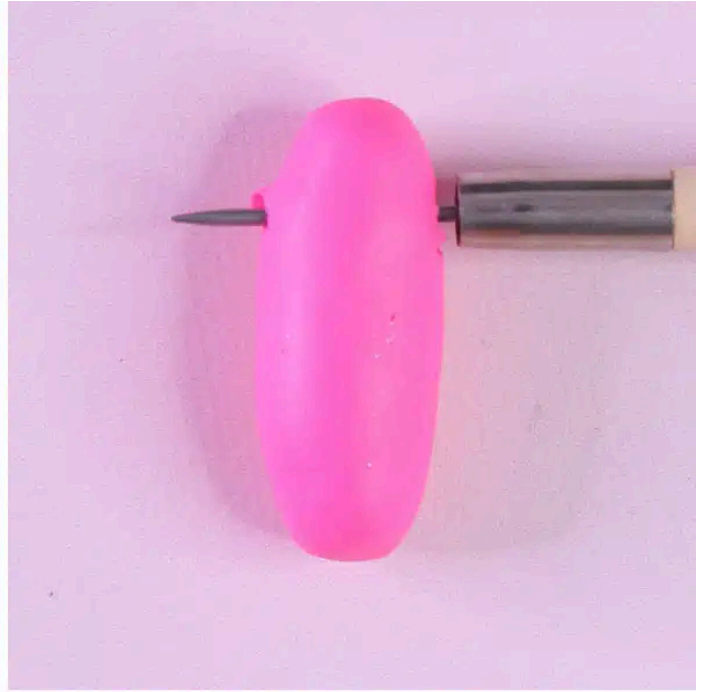
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These will be made in the same way as the square beads, but at the start, instead of cutting pieces the same size as the diameter of the log, you will cut off rectangular pieces.

Shape the edges with your thumb and forefinger, keeping the rectangular shape. Or gently push each side onto the work surface to get flat edges and sharp corners.

With oblong beads, you must decide which way you want the beads to hang once they are strung-vertically or horizontally. Then pierce the holes for the beads accordingly.

Oblong beads with a horizontal hole make great feature pendants.



### **5. How to Make Oval Beads**

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Oval beads will also fall within 'Oblong beads'. To make oval beads, start with rectangular pieces, as above, then roll them into oval shapes in the palms of your hands.

### **6. Teardrop or Diamond-Shaped Beads**

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If you want more elaborate beads, such as teardrop or diamond-shaped beads, you can either mold them carefully by hand, or if you want them to be absolutely uniform in size and shape, you will need to use a Fimo Magic Roller. To make a bead, just drop a ball of clay in one of the slots

and roll the top back and forth to smooth out the clay. This will give you a smooth, uniform bead every time.

To make teardrop shapes without a mold, you can roll the clay into a cylinder, cut off pieces to the correct size, then pinch one end to make it narrow. Keep pinching and smoothing until it is in the right shape!

## **7. Molded Beads**

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If you want to make beads that are a specific shape, such as a rose shape or a skull shape, you will need to make a mold first. You can make the mold out of polymer clay too! This is how to do this:

1. Choose a charm or a bead. Check that it is spotless and undamaged.
2. Make a rough ball of polymer clay somewhat bigger than your bead and condition it as previously explained.
3. For a bead impression, press the bead firmly into the clay's surface and then lift it straight up. If the first attempt doesn't work out, just re-roll the clay and try again.
4. When you've finished adjusting your mold to your satisfaction, bake it as directed. You should wait till it's absolutely cool to touch. Spray varnish is optional, but it is useful to prevent the clay from sticking when dry.
5. Roll a little clay into a smooth ball. Your bead will reflect any creases or wrinkles in the ball, so make sure it is entirely smooth. Ensure a tight fit by pressing it firmly into the mold.
6. Carefully remove the clay from the mold. Smooth the back and sides while keeping the shape of the bead's front intact. Carefully make the holes through the beads without squashing your molded shape.

## **8. Polymer Clay Beads with Foil**

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Adding foil to the polymer clay beads adds a touch of luxury and elegance and is easy to do. I bought my foil in a small bottle from Kmart. Just check the label to see if it is safe for the oven.

1. Make the bead according to any of the shape instructions above. Don't add the hole yet.
2. With a pair of tweezers, place pieces of foil all around the bead.
3. Roll the bead, so the foil embeds in the surface.
4. Add the hole.





How to Make Polymer Clay Beads with Foil

## 9. Polymer Clay Beads with Spots

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If you want your beads to have dots on them, start by making the base bead, and rolling it into a ball shape.

Then choose the color of spots you would like, and roll a piece of clay of that color into a very narrow log. Place it in the fridge for a while so that it keeps its rounded shape.

Use a craft knife to cut tiny slices off the log and place them onto the bead with tweezers or the tip of the craft knife. Roll the bead with its attached dots around in your hand for a while to push the dots into the bead.

Make your hole and bake as always. This will be very finicky and tiny!

You could also roll the clay out flat, then add the spots, then roll it into beads, but your spots will not be as precise!



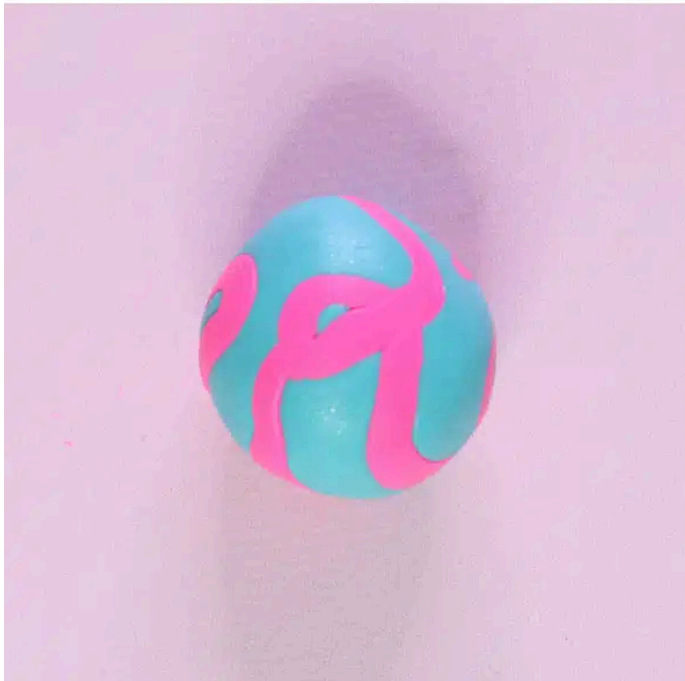
How to Make Polymer Clay Beads with Dots

## 10. Polymer Clay Beads with Stripes

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And last is making stripes. Here is how to make random stripes but you could use this same technique to make even stripes.

1. Choose the colors for the bead base stripes and condition the clay.
2. Roll the bead as per normal.
3. Roll a long thin snake for the stripe color.
4. Apply the stripe color over the bead either randomly or geometrically.
5. Roll the bead until the strip color is flat.
6. Add the hole.



How to Make Polymer Clay Beads with Stripes

#### Step 4 - Adding Holes To Clay Beads

Place the ball onto your work surface and push a darning needle, awl toothpick, knitting needle or skewer through the ball.

Choose whichever needle tool will make the size of the hole that you require. Lift the ball on the needle and hold it lightly in your other hand. Be careful not to squash it and lose the round shape! Push the needle/skewer all the way through the bead.

If your bead has become slightly distorted from the piercing, roll it again, gently, still with the needle/ skewer inside it to prevent the hole from closing up.

If you feel your beads become too misshapen doing this, you can bake them first, then use a manual or battery-operated fine drill to pierce holes after the beads are baked.



How to Add Holes to Polymer Clay Beads

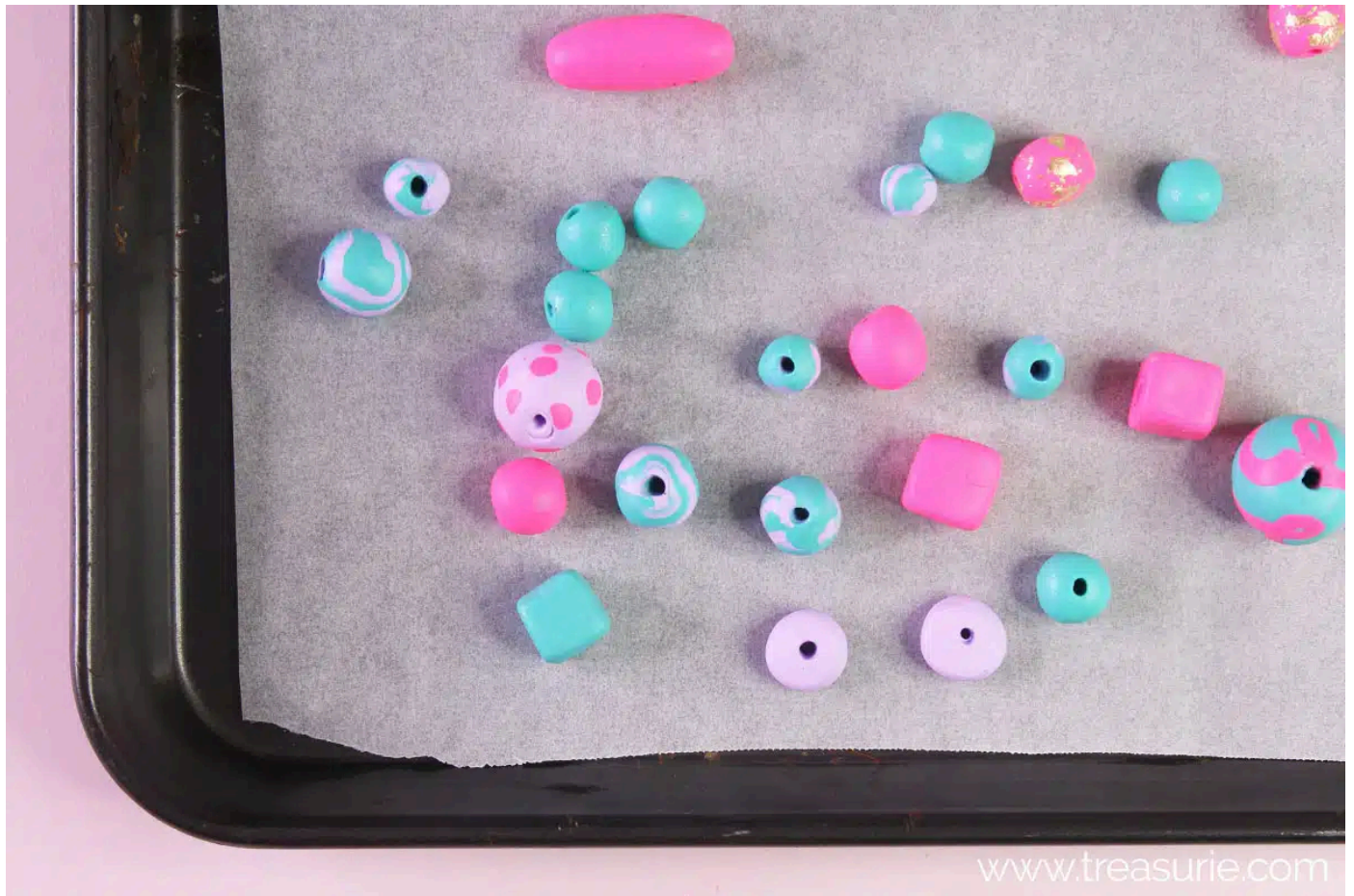
## Step 5 - Baking Polymer Clay Beads

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When you have made enough beads, place them onto a baking sheet lined with baking paper and bake at a low temperature for the recommended baking time.

If your packaging does not give a recommended time and temperature, a good starting point would be around 275 degrees Fahrenheit (135C) for 15 to 20 minutes per 1/4" (6.3 mm). Read more about [how to bake polymer clay](#).





If you are worried about your beads squashing flat, keep them suspended on wires across the edge of your baking tray.





## Finishing And Threading The Beads

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If you see noticeable fingerprints or blemishes in your finished beads, it is possible to remove them with sandpaper. Wear a mask and gently rub it with wet sandpaper to minimize dust.

Water-based polyurethane varnish is the best varnish for polymer clay in terms of shine, price, and quality. But you can use other glazes like epoxy resin, liquid acrylic, or even Mod Podge, depending on your budget and how you want the project to look when it's done.



### How to Make Polymer Clay Beads

Painting or varnishing your polymer clay project should be done after it has cooled.

Wait until the clay has cooled completely before proceeding. In spite of its warmth, it is still fragile, and you risk having the paint or varnish dry before you can spread it if you try to do so before it has fully cooled.

For threading, I would suggest using a strong thread or wire that is between 0.2 and 0.3 millimeters in diameter. Push the ends of your thread or wire into the bead holes next to the join.



How to Make Polymer Clay Bead Necklaces

## Tips to Make Uniform Clay Beads

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Follow this procedure if you want to make perfectly uniform-sized beads.

1. Roll your clay into one large ball.
2. Use your acrylic roller to flatten the clay to around  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch (3mm) in thickness.
3. Use a small cutter to cut pieces. You can get different sizes by using different sized cutters.
4. Now roll into even-sized beads.



Making Uniform Polymer Clay Beads

## How to Make Polymer Clay Beads - In Conclusion

Lastly, just be yourself and have fun. You shouldn't take this too seriously. Whatever happens, it's just clay, right? In reality, your so-called "mistakes" are merely the stepping stones to your eventual mastery of a subject. I hope that your time spent experimenting and learning how to make polymer clay beads will become a joyful and fulfilling part of your life.



All you need to know about how to make polymer clay beads for necklaces, bracelets and all your clay projects.