

# You've Got Questions, We've Got Answers!

by Lisa Pavelka



Dear Lisa:

I have some questions about sanding. I understand the basic concept -- start out with 400 grit and go up from there. The problem is that I really don't know how long to sand. Five minutes per grade? Ten minutes? Half an hour? When the piece falls apart? Is there some sort of general guideline to tell when it's time to switch? Also, how many grades of sandpaper are really necessary? What's the minimum you can use and still have your pieces come out looking good? Advice would be appreciated

Amy Gambino

Hi Amy!

I find when sanding a piece it will get noticeably smoother with each grade of sand paper used. I sand with each grade until I notice a difference in smoothness from the last grade used. For example, when sanding a pen, I spend about 2-3 minutes with each grade. The number of grades used is definitely a personal preference. I have two formulas I use before the final buffing. To achieve maximum shine and smoothness ( I prefer a glass-like smoothness over a satin finish), I start with 400 and progress through 600, 800, 1000 and sometimes even 1500 and 2000.

I use only 3M® automotive grade, wet-dry paper. I found inconsistencies with other brands. Some other sandpapers are much more abrasive than the 3M® brand. You may find that another brand's 800 grit is so abrasive that it leaves deep scratches in your piece.

Tip: I cut my sandpaper into small squares (except when sanding very large pieces like my purses) and store between dividers in a recipe card box. I never reuse the sandpaper. It loses grit very quickly and will not provide consistent results if overused. (Used sandpaper is great for cleaning and sharpening your clay blades, however).

I hope this helps. Feel free to experiment to find what works for you. It seems that most polymer clay artists I know each have a different formula for sanding. Experiment to find what works best for your needs.

Yours In Clay,

Lisa

Dear Lisa,

I'm Garlinda Price, part-time costume jewelry designer. I want to know if when doing the photo transfer project, does it have to be something that is copyright free or can it be any photo, print, or artistic picture from library books, magazines, etc? I have a catalog I'd like to take pictures from to make jewelry and Christmas ornaments, but I don't know the answer to this question.

Dear Garlinda:

If you use pictures from books, magazines, etc. without written, authorized permission from the owner, you are liable for copyright infringement.

However, you can find thousands of copyright free images and photos available through the Dover Copyright-Free collection and licensed computer graphic programs. You can contact Dover Publications at 31 East 2ns Street. Mineola, New York, 11501, (515) 294-7000.

Be aware, however, that although copyright free, these books and programs often stipulate that the images cannot be used for mass duplication or in mass product manufacture. Many Dover publications can be found at bookstores and on-line (i.e. Amazon.com). I know they have catalogs of their copyright free books.

Another potential source for images in photo transfer projects is rubber stamps. You can stamp onto paper, photocopy, and transfer to clay. The right to do this without a copyright infringement varies from company to company, however. Some stamp manufacturers allow no usage designed for resale without their written permission. Other stamp companies, referred to as "Angel Companies," allow their stamp images to be used in products designed for resale. Judith Perry has put together the most comprehensive list of Angel Companies that I know of, which includes their policies regarding the use of their images. You can check out the list at: [www.littlebit.com/AngelList/](http://www.littlebit.com/AngelList/).

Good luck in your search for images!

Yours In Clay,

Lisa



Dear Lisa,

I'm working with Fimo Soft Transluents and am plagued with subsurface bubbles. I've tried working it to death (or so it seems to me) with the pasta machine, and I have just tried lowering the temp to 220-225 degrees for 60 minutes. The latter is an improvement bubble-wise, but the pieces are brittle. More time-temp experimenting is needed, but I thought you might have experience with this problem and could help or direct me to someone who may have solved it.

Thank you,

Peggy Miller

Hi Peggy:

What you're experiencing is called "placquing" It's a condition that often occurs with Fimo. The more translucent the Fimo, the more placquing you are likely to experience. I won't go into a long scientific oration on what causes this.

I can tell you placquing can also occur with other brands of translucent clay, especially when you introduce moisture-rich inclusions such as ground spices or incense into the clay. Some people actually work to achieve this effect, especially in trying to reproduce the look of stone. Of course, if it's not what you desire, this effect can be a pain-in-the-you-know-what. I found you can avoid the problem almost entirely by using Premo Sculpey Translucent. You can create translucent colors by mixing small amounts of colored Premo Sculpey into translucent clay.

Finally, it is important to take great care to avoid air bubbles when conditioning any translucent clay. Translucent clays, even Premo, show even the most minute air bubbles. This also looks like placquing. I usually condition translucent clay very carefully by hand. If conditioning with a pasta machine, try to stick with the largest setting and make sure no air gets trapped between layers after folding and before running through the machine again.

I hope this helps solve your problem. I know a lot of people experience placquing, so if any of our readers have advice regarding this problem, I'd be happy to print it in a future issue.

Yours in Clay,

Lisa

Feel free to send your polymer clay questions to: [questions@polyzine.com](mailto:questions@polyzine.com)



