

Beginners Training Suggestions

This short article suggests topics and activities that you might cover in metal clay beginners training. It's pretty generic so applies to Art Clay or PMC. Which of these elements you include in your training will depend on several factors; the age or previous experience of your students, the length of the class – whether it's a few hours of taster or a weekend workshop. It may also depend on the facilities you are training in. If you have a room in a hotel or community center, you may not be allowed to use an open flame so torch firing will not be possible. If you are training in a well-equipped studio you may be able to include more elements.

Minimum you should teach in a beginner session:-

1. How to keep the clay moist
2. Information about the working time of the clay and what to do if it begins to dry out
3. How to store unused clay
4. The need for lubrication of tools, hands and surfaces
5. Basic tools – roller, work surface, cutters, textures, drinking straws, tooth picks, nail files/salon boards
6. How to roll out the clay to a consistent thickness
7. Texturing the clay
8. How to make holes for hanging earrings or pendants
9. The need for drying the clay before firing
10. How to refine edges and surfaces of dried clay
11. How to reconstitute dried clay back to working consistency
12. What is slip and how to make it
13. Firing times and techniques

Think of a simple beginners project that allows you to teach all these elements. This will allow students to create something to take away while learning the basic skills.

More complicated things to teach if you have time and/or facilities:-

1. History of metal clay and the variety of clays available
2. Variety of bails – wrapover, bent round a straw, attached after drying
3. Simple bead making
4. Using layers – joining layers with slip
5. Using cork clay for hollow forms
6. Basic stone setting for fire in place CZ's
7. Painting with slip
8. Torch firing
9. Making three dimensional forms – charms
10. Making and using moulds/moulding compound

In beginners training you should also supply a handout with basic information and suppliers. If you don't have time to talk about all the varieties of metal clay, advise students to buy the strongest/lowest firing clay – PMC3 or ACS 650. In a very short taster avoid giving too much information, as this can be very confusing – stick to a simple project that can be easily achieved in the time.