

## Porcelain Jewelry for Beginners

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Making large objects from clay takes a lot of patience, sweat and dexterity, but making tiny pieces of jewelry can be another challenge altogether. For those of you who have decided to venture off into this delicate art form, here's a few tips to get you started and keep you on the path to making some fine, wearable pieces you can be proud of.

### List of Supplies:

- Small sponge
- Wooden rolling pin
- Hole cutter
- Cutting wire
- Pottery knife
- Fine sable watercolor brushes
- Metal findings (for earrings and brooches)
- Face mask (for firing)

### Be Prepared

You want to make sure you have everything at your finger tips so that you don't have to run to the store midway and come back to a hardened un-useable lump of clay. You can find supplies at most pottery stores. Greenbarn Pottery Supplies in Surrey, BC is one of my favorites.

### The Right Clay for the Right Job

Porcelain is the best type of clay to use for jewelry because of its refined quality. It is smooth, pure and becomes very hard after being fired at 2200 degrees.

### Shaping Techniques

It can be a fun exercise to pound away at your clay and throw great lumps to vent your frustrations, but for jewelry, a more delicate touch is required.

After rolling the clay to about 1/8 inches thick, use your pre-shaped cutter to press down and create uniform shapes, just like making cookies. Or for the more adventurous types, make your own shapes using dry hands, and a small sponge to smooth out the edges. Using a picture for reference always helps but remember to make the pieces slightly larger to allow for shrinkage. A word of warning: thin shapes can be broken very easily. For example, the thin legs of animals should be avoided. For a look at some effective shapes, take a look at the animal pins on my website at [www.winnietam.ca](http://www.winnietam.ca).

### Making Holes

Now that you have your shapes ready, it's time to put in holes for earrings, necklace chains or brooches. This can be done by using hole cutters of varying sizes, found at any pottery store. Don't make the holes too close to the edges, as they can easily break.

### Painting

This requires good eyesight for the fine details and a steady hand. Under glazes are the only type of color to use as they can withstand the high temperature of firing. The only drawback is that you cannot see the exact color until the final firing, so this will take some trial and error.

Use a fine, sable watercolor brush and add one color at a time to build up to the final picture. For those who have taken any watercolor or oil painting classes, the same techniques apply going from light to dark.

### **Firing and Glazes**

Now it's time to put it in the oven and wait for the glorious results. Be aware that the fumes from firing are deadly, so extreme caution must be used to avoid gas poisoning. After firing it with the colors painted on (4 times), apply glaze on top and use a wet sponge to wipe off any drips at the bottom of the piece. A clear glaze can be used or a mother of pearl luster adds depth and brilliance. I usually paint on 22K gold luster to the edges, using a fine brush, however this can be very expensive – a 10 gram bottle is \$270.

### **Attachments**

It goes without saying that hypo-allergenic metal is the only kind to use for attachments, especially earrings, for health reasons. Always apply your attachments after the final firing. The best glue to use for brooches is Goop Houseware Glue. It takes 24 hours to cure.

### **Support and Reading**

Making pottery alone in my studio is very therapeutic and relaxing for me, I can get very absorbed in the process. However, for those who prefer to learn and exchange ideas in a group situation check out the Potters Guild of BC at [www.bcpotters.com](http://www.bcpotters.com). You will find workshops, networking opportunities and discussion board, all very helpful for those starting out.

A great magazine filled with pictures, articles, contests and suggested reading is Ceramics Monthly. Many potters send in tips they've learned along the way and it's a good magazine to see some incredible pieces. This is meant to inspire, by the way. Be patient, keep practicing and before long you will be presenting friends and family with your beautiful treasured creations for many special occasions to come.