

Clay Sheet Thickness Settings (Playing Cards Method)



Since pasta machine settings are not all set up the same, clay sheet thickness in articles are referred to in a "card thickness" setting which is the number of playing cards that fit between the rollers of the pasta machine at the thickness needed.

To find your pasta machine's card thickness settings, use any standard playing card deck and see how many cards will fit between the roller without forcing it at each setting. You can mark your number of cards on the chart seen here and attach this to your machine. There is a copy of this chart that can be printed out from our website at: www.tenthmusearts.com/resources/

The charts below map two popular machines but your machine, even if the same model, may be different, so please check if the thickness is particularly important to the tutorial.

Atlas (150mm Model)

Designation	Setting	Cards
Thin	6-7	1 card
Medium Thin	5	2 cards
Medium	4	4 cards
Medium Thick	3	5 cards
Thick	2	7 cards
Extra Thick	1	8 cards

DREAM Machine

Designation	Setting	Cards
Extra Thin	9-10	1 card
Thin	8	2 cards
Medium Thin	7	3 cards
Medium	6	4 cards
Medium Thick	5	5 cards
Thick	4	7 cards
Very Thick	3	8 cards
Extra Thick	1-2	9 cards

Blank Pasta Machine Card Thickness Table:

Cut out, copy or write up your own and attach to your machine for easy reference.

Designation	Setting	Cards
Extra Thin		
Thin		
Medium Thin		
Medium		
Medium Thick		
Thick		
Very Thick		
Extra Thick		

Conditioning Clay

Conditioning your clay is important both for its workability and its structural strength. The process of conditioning softens the clay, making it easier to work with. It also redistributes the plasticizer and other additives that tend to settle while in storage. An even redistribution of the ingredients in the polymer clay helps ensure an even curing of the polymer, making it strong and reducing potential weak points.

To condition polymer from a standard clay block:

1. Slice sections off the block and roll them through the pasta machine on the thickest setting or under a hand roller.
2. Stack together two or three of these rolled slices and roll through the machine or under your roller again, or start kneading by hand by creating a log that you then fold-over and twist, much like wringing out a wet towel. Roll this into a rough log again and repeat the folding and twisting until the clay is soft all the way through.
3. Keep adding slices to the sheet or keep adding to your log, rolling or kneading it after each addition, until all the clay you need is in one sheet (or one log), or the sheet has gotten as big as the pasta machine can handle. Then continue to fold and roll it (or knead it) until evenly pliable. In most cases, this should be done at least a dozen times to ensure all ingredients have been evenly distributed.

Note: If the clay block is pretty soft to start with, you can roll it flat enough to put into your pasta machine with the hand roller, skipping the slicing and stacking steps to make the conditioning go faster. However, do not force a thick slab, especially if it is hard clay, into your machine. This will put undue wear on the rollers of your pasta machine.

Creating a Skinner Blend

A Skinner blend creates a sheet of clay with a blended gradation from one color to another.

Condition and roll out squares of clay of the same size and thickness in the colors the tutorial indicates. Cut each square on the diagonal to create triangles. Put two triangles of two different colors together to create a square as shown.

Gently press the triangles together so they stick, edge to edge, well enough that you can fold this pieced together sheet in half across its horizontal middle, each triangle's tip now touching its base. Roll this through the pasta machine, fold side going in first, on the same setting the triangle sheets were created on.

Fold this sheet across its horizontal middle again, running it through the pasta machine, fold side first. Continue to fold the sheet and run it through the pasta machine, always on the horizontal middle and fold side down, until the colors are well blended across the sheet.



If your Skinner blend will have more than one color, cut the square of the middle color(s) on the diagonal, flip and press sides back to back to create a wide triangle then line up and assemble with the side triangles to create a rectangle.



Leaching Clay

Leach clay when it is too soft for the technique you are using or simply difficult to handle.

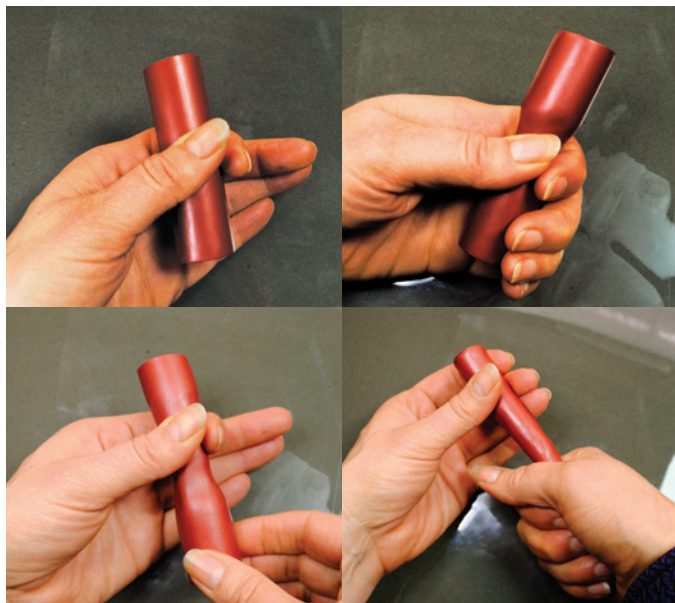
Condition the clay into medium-thin, sheets and lay between two pieces of blank white paper. The paper will soak up the clay's plasticizer, reducing the softness of the clay. Burnish the paper to the clay surface for best results. You can also put weight on top, starting with a tile or other nonporous surface, and adding books or other heavy objects on that.

Start with 1 hour and then take out a pinch of clay and see how it feels and see how long it might still need if any. Continue checking every 30 -60 minutes. Set a timer when you do this and do not leave it overnight. If left too long you will end up with crumbly, useless polymer.

Reducing a Cane

To reduce a round cane, wrap your fingers around the center of the cane length and compress to create a "waist."

Move your fingers to the section just above or below the waist and compress again, pulling gently as you do away from the center. Continue compressing and gently pulling up each side until the cane is approximately the same width along the whole length. Roll gently to even the cane out. Go back to the center of the cane's length and repeat this process of making a waist and then reducing from the center out until the cane's width is the desired size.



Burnishing Clay

Burnishing is simply rubbing the clay down to smooth and seal the surface of the clay and can be done on any flat clay surface.

Use a smooth piece of paper – tracing paper, vellum or unwaxed deli papers – and a small square of cardstock. Lay the smooth paper over your clay and rub firmly but not hard all over it with the cardstock. The heat from the friction, moreso than the pressure of the rubbing, is what seals the clay surface. This will get you started on a nice finish to the clay as well as being a necessity for image transfers and some other techniques.

