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Making Beads Using a Two-Part Mold

Before You Begin

Using a two-part mold compound such as Rio Cold-Mold allows you to create a flexible rubber mold that you can use to replicate designs and jewelry pieces. Mold compound is available in two parts (usually labeled "Part A" and "Part B"). When equal amounts are mixed, the compound cures to a flexible rubber mold.

Once the mold compound parts are mixed, the curing process begins immediately and you'll have only a few minutes of working time, so make sure you have everything ready before you begin mixing. **Note:** Two-part mold compounds have a built-in mold release, so once you've finished curing, the item can be easily removed. The compound also won't bond to itself after curing, so it's easy for you to create two-part molds.

To test if the compound has cured completely, lightly press your nail into the rubber. If it leaves a mark, then it has not completely cured; the mold will feel firm yet slightly rubbery once completely cured.

Note: Objects to be molded should be smooth and free of undercuts or major defects. Objects such as river rocks, marbles and other types of decorative glass make excellent molds.

Creating A Smooth Saucer Bead

To make a smooth saucer bead, use a marble to create your mold.

1. Take a ball of each compound, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ " diameter (about twice the size of the marble) and mix the two parts together until the color is uniform. Roll the compound into a log shape that, when standing on end, is taller than the two marbles being molded. Lightly press the marbles, one at a time, into the compound (press until half of the marble is set into the compound); be careful to not press all the way through the compound. If necessary, tap the mold compound around the circumference of each marble to it makes contact with all sides. Make sure the mold compound is level around each marble. Allow the compound to cure for approximately 15 minutes (or as directed by the manufacturer). Remove the marbles when the mold is cured.
2. Roll your PMC+® three-cards thick. Use a dime or other template to cut two discs. Place one of the discs under plastic wrap to keep it moist.
3. Using your fingertip, gently press the other disc deep into the mold to create a dome. Remove the other disc from the plastic wrap and repeat. Set aside and allow the PMC+ to dry. To hasten drying, use a food dehydrator.
4. Once dry, remove the PMC+ from the mold. Use the nail file to sand the edges of both domes flat. As you're filing, periodically place the domes together to make sure the edges match.
5. Dip the paint brush in water and run it along the sanded edge of each dome.
6. Extrude a line of PMC+® slip from the syringe and run it along the edge of one of the domes.
7. Press the two domes together, forming a saucer bead. Use the blending tool from the PMC tool kit to blend any slip the that comes out at the seam.

supplies:

PMC+® (see your Rio Grande catalogs)
PMC+® slip syringe (#100-884)
Rio Cold-Mold compound (#701-046)
Work surface (#111-565 or #111-567)
PMC® tool kit (#111-411 or #100-965)
Dime or round template such as a Klay Cutter (#111-390)
Sanding pads Plastic wrap
Polishing paper Permanent marker
Nail files Smooth river rock
1mm drill bit Two marbles
Pin vise Slip Texture (optional)
Water

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8. Set the bead aside and allow it to dry. Once dry, if there are any gaps in the seam, use the syringe to fill them in with PMC+ slip and blend smooth until the seam is no longer visible. Allow the seam to dry.
9. Use a sanding pad or nail file to sand the edges of the seam and the domed surfaces of the bead until the bead is smooth. Add surface decorations if desired.
10. Find the center of each side of the bead and mark it with a pencil. Using a 1mm twist drill, gently drill a hole through the center on both sides. Note: Remember to let the drill do the work; if you use too much pressure on the drill, the bead may crack.
11. Support the bead in vermiculite and fire at 1650°F for 10 minutes.
12. Use the brass brush to clean the fired bead and finish as desired.

Creating A Textured Saucer Bead

1. Follow Step 1 under “Creating A Smooth Saucer Bead” to make your mold.
2. Mix another batch of mold compound using the same ratio as your original batch above. Press the lump into the mold created in Step 1, ensuring the compound goes all the way into the domed space. Allow the mold to cure. Once cured pry the two molds apart; you now have a positive and negative mold of two marbles. To form the textured beads you will be using the positive mold.
3. Roll your PMC+® three-cards thick. Texture as desired.
4. Use a dime as a template to cut two discs. Place one of the discs under plastic wrap to keep it moist.
5. Gently drape the other disc over one of the molded domes and use your fingertips to contour the PMC+® around the shape of the dome. Remove the other disc from the plastic wrap and repeat. Set aside and allow the PMC+ to dry. To hasten drying, use a food dehydrator.
6. Once dry, remove the PMC+ from the mold. Use the nail file to sand the edges of both domes flat. As you’re filing, periodically place the domes together to make sure the edges match.
7. Dip the paint brush in water and run it along the sanded edge of each dome.
8. Extrude a line of PMC+® slip from the syringe and run it along the edge of one of the domes.
9. Press the two domes together, forming a saucer bead. Use the blending tool from the PMC tool kit to blend any slip that comes out at the seam.
10. Set the bead aside and allow it to dry. Once dry, if there are any gaps in the seam, use the syringe to fill them in with PMC+ slip and blend smooth until the seam is no longer visible. Allow the seam to dry.
11. Use a sanding pad or nail file to sand the edges of the seam smooth, being careful to not sand your texture.
12. Find the center of each side of the bead and mark it with a pencil. Using a 1mm twist drill, gently drill a hole through the center on both sides. Note: Remember to let the drill do the work; if you use too much pressure on the drill, the bead may crack.
13. Support the bead in vermiculite and fire at 1650°F for 10 minutes.
14. Use the brass brush to clean the fired bead and finish as desired.

Creating A River Rock Bead

1. Take the rock to be molded and use a permanent marker to mark a line around the circumference of it. This line will help you determine how deep the rock should be pressed into the mixed mold compound.
2. Take equal parts of both parts of the compound (each part should be about the size of the rock you are molding). Mix the parts together until the color is uniform. Roll and form the compound into the approximate shape of the rock. **Note:** The form must be taller than the rock being molded. Lightly press the rock into the compound up to the circumference line; be careful to not press all the way through the compound. If necessary, tap the mold compound around the circumference of the rock so it makes contact with all sides. Make sure the mold compound is level around the rock. Allow to cure for approximately 15 minutes (or as directed by the manufacturer). Test the compound to make sure it is cured completely.

3. Once the compound has cured, remove the rock and inspect the mold to make sure there are no air bubbles or other imperfections. Insert the rock back into the mold. Mix another batch of mold compound at the same ratio as in Step 1 and roll it into a ball. Press the center of the ball down onto the center of the rock and form the compound down and around the rock so it's completely covered. Gently press the edges in toward the rock. Allow to cure for approximately 15 minutes (or as directed by the manufacturer).
4. Once cured, pry the mold apart and remove the rock.
5. Roll your PMC+® three-cards thick. Place the rolled PMC+ into one of the mold pieces. Use your fingertip or knuckle to gently tap it into place, making sure all the PMC+ is making contact with the mold. Use a craft knife to trim excess PMC+ from the edges of the mold.
6. Repeat step 5 with the other half of the mold.
7. Set aside the two molds and allow the PMC+® to dry. To hasten drying, use a food dehydrator.
8. Once dry, remove the PMC+ from the mold. Use a sanding pad or nail file to sand the edges of both domes flat. As you're filing, periodically place the domes together to make sure the edges match.
9. Dip the paint brush in water and run it along the sanded edge of each dome.
10. Extrude a line of PMC+® slip from the syringe and run it along the edge of one of the domes.
11. Press the two domes together, forming a saucer bead. Use the blending tool from the PMC tool kit to blend any slip that comes out at the seam.
12. Set the bead aside and allow it to dry. Once dry, if there are any gaps in the seam, use the syringe to fill them in with PMC+ slip and blend smooth until the seam is no longer visible. Allow the seam to dry.
13. Use a sanding pad or nail file to sand the edges of the seam smooth. Add texture or decorations as desired.
14. Find the center of each side of the bead and mark it with a pencil. Using a 1mm twist drill, gently drill a hole through the center on both sides. Note: Remember to let the drill do the work; if you use too much pressure on the drill, the bead may crack. If the holes are at the seam, the seam may open slightly. If this occurs, simply wet the crack with water and fill with slip. Allow to dry completely.
15. Support the bead in vermiculite and fire at 1650°F for 10 minutes.
16. Use the brass brush to clean the fired bead and finish as desired.

