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Ouchless Sanding Tool

By Jennifer Patterson

Some of the problems in doing production work, especially with things that need sanding, are bloody fingers, and cramping hands. It's the little things! The things where your fingers get so close to the sandpaper, you sand the skin too.

I tried all sorts of things, tape on my fingers, holding the clay in different ways, etc. Someone once recommended using those suction cups, and while they helped some, I wasn't satisfied. I was still getting cramps in my hands, and the cups let loose all the time.

Last fall while getting ready for a big show, I was frustrated. Therefore, I experimented with a number of different things, trying to get the clay piece to stick to the suction cups. The one I found that worked best was hot glue. Yep, hot glue worked, it held things in place, and did not hurt the clay. This was a big step; more experimenting and I made a sanding tool. One where I don't sand my fingers bloody, and my hands don't get cramps.

Supplies Needed:

- Some scrap clay
- Package suction cup hooks - extra small
- Brass tubing about 3/32" diameter (bring your suction cup with, make sure the wire fits into tube, as snug as possible.)
- Hot glue gn or low temp glue gun
- Glue sticks
- Pliers
- Tube cutter (or wire cutter)
- Super glue

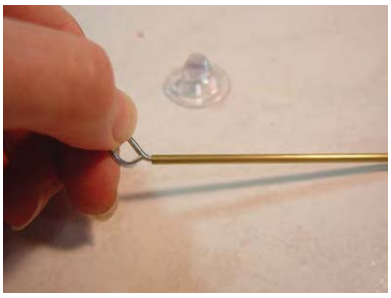
Making the Tool - Tool #1

You can make either a 2-sided tool, or 2 separate tools; I like 2 separate ones.

Take your suction cup; remove the plastic part from the wire.

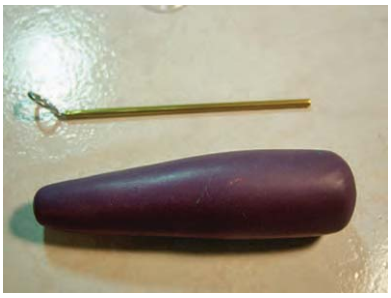
Using a tube type cutter, (if you use a wire cutter, you will need to ream the hole open.) cut your brass tube about 3" long.

Using your pliers, straighten the hook of the suction cup wire. Do not distort the loop end though.

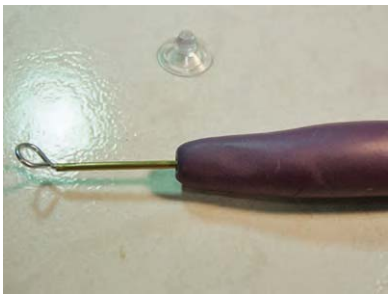


Put a drop of super glue on the straightened end of the suction cup wire, then insert into one open end of the brass tube.

Use your pliers to crimp the brass tube tightly around the wire. Leaving the loop at about a 45-degree angle.



Now take your scrap clay and make a handle shape. Make this so it fits comfortably in your palm. You can decorate this: Carve it, put canes on it, and make it yours!



After your handle is made, coat the brass tube with sobo, then insert the tube into the handle. Pinch down the end close to the loop, so you have a nice snug fit. Bake!

Now put the suction cup back on the wire loop.

Using your hot glue gun, enclose the wire all around, covering it on all visible sides, and overflowing on the plastic.

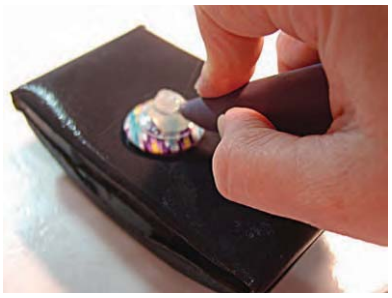
Tool #2

Go through the same steps as above, only bend the loop to a 90-degree angle, then hot glue it to the concave side of the suction cup.

Using the Tool

Starting with tool #1, place a drop of hot glue into the concave side of the suction cup

Then adhere it to the topside of your clay piece. Here I have stuck it to the top of a small lentil half.



Now I can sand the back flat by holding the tool, not the clay! When you are done sanding, just peel the hot glue off the clay. It doesn't hurt it a bit!

You can then choose to peel the glue off the plastic suction cup or not. I tend to pile it up for a while before peeling it off.

To use tool #2, place a drop of hot glue to the end of the suction cup or on to the clay.

Now you can hold the paper or the sanding block in one hand & the tool in the other. When done peel the glue off. I like this one when sanding the convex side of lentil beads.

The plastic does degrade after numerous uses, you can replace it easily! Using a knife just cut through the hot glue, releasing the cup from the wire loop. Put a new one in the loop, and hot glue it place again!

I love this tool it is a rubber sanding block, I think I paid something like $4 for it at Sears. It holds the sand paper nice and flat using these little pegs on each end.

This is so great! If you have larger flat pieces to sand, make a tool using a larger suction cup. It will give you more gripping surface.

Warning: Be sure your surfaces have no air bubbles or flakes in them, sometimes the hot glue can peel these off.

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