

# Polymer Clay Turquoise Tutorial



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Here's my technique for creating turquoise out of polymer clay. It doesn't require special tools or materials; you probably already have everything you need in your clay space. What it does require is patience during the paint and ink drying time which will be a few days... but it's worth it!



## For base turquoise stone:

- Polymer clay in turquoise colors  
*I've used Premo!, Cernit, and Souffle with great results. (Do NOT use metallics, mica clays, or clay with inclusions.)*
- Translucent polymer clay
- Black or dark brown acrylic paint
- Alcohol ink  
*I use Adirondack 'Stream' and 'Sailboat Blue', and sometimes 'Pebble'*

## For host rock:

- Small amount of black & dark brown colors

## For iron pyrite:

- Imitation gold foil sheets (the kind used for leafing)

## Supplies:

- Isopropyl alcohol (rubbing alcohol), water
- A few small paint brushes
- Blade for chopping + sharp blade for slicing
- Deli plastic wrap sheets
- Tile or other surface for painting and applying ink
- Wet/dry sandpaper (optional)
- Transparent liquid clay and heat gun (optional)



Use a 4 to 1 ratio of turquoise to translucent clay. This means if you use 2 oz. of blue/turquoise clay, add a 1/2 oz. (or less) of translucent clay. This is not an exact measurement, just estimate. I do this because although actual turquoise is an opaque material, the translucent clay will give your mix a luster that's difficult to achieve with flat colored-clay alone... and who doesn't want luster?



Blend the mix well and leach your clay if it's soft.

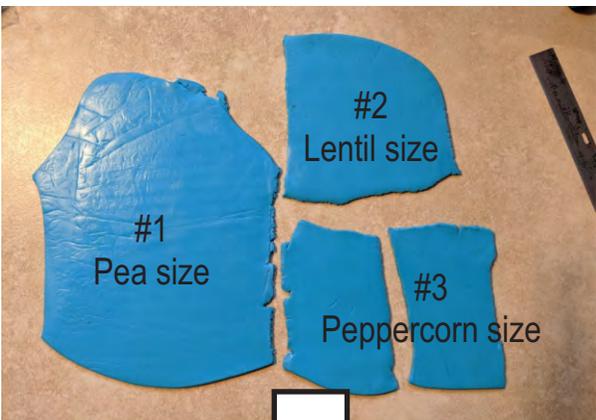
*This is important!*

This technique works best without excess plasticizer. I've used some tissue paper here for leaching but you can use regular bond paper as well. The goal is to be able to chop your clay into pieces without them sticking together too much. If your clay is really fresh, save yourself a little frustration and leach it.



For realism, I recommend making a matrix of host rock in your turquoise. Take a small amount (1/8 of a 2 oz. block) of black and dark brown clays and chop them finely together. Set this aside.

Hint: Chopping up a little of the gold leafing foil into your host rock mix will make it even MORE realistic.



Separate your blended mix into pieces like the photo.

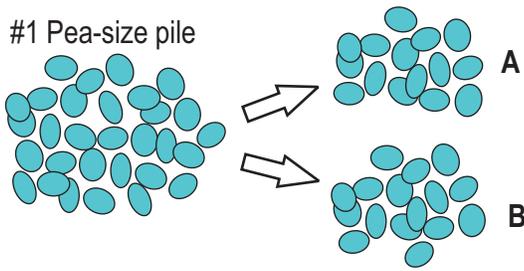
With your blade, cut the largest piece (#1) into green pea-sized pieces with some slightly larger pieces in there, too. No need to be exact; just make the smallest ones no smaller than a pea. Cut #2 sheet into slightly smaller pieces and cut #3 piles into peppercorn and smaller pieces.

Give yourself enough room on your work surface. Gently roll the #1 pieces with the palm of your hand to soften the edges and corners of the 'peas'. They shouldn't be completely round but the edges need to be rounded. Set these aside for later.

Do the same thing for #2 pieces and the #3 pieces, and make sure to keep them in their separate piles according to size. This might take a while so relax and feel the zen of the process...

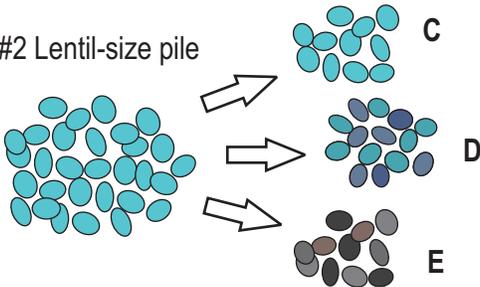


#1 Pea-size pile



Split the pea-size pile of clay into two piles (A and B) and set aside.

#2 Lentil-size pile



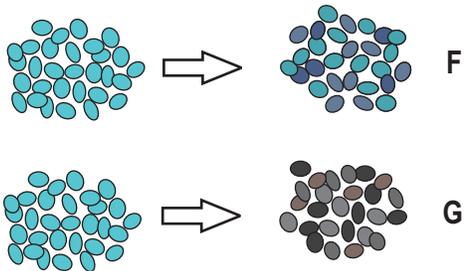
Split the lentil-sized clay pile into three piles.

Pile C: Do nothing

Pile D: Add 5-6 drops of the alcohol inks and add isopropyl alcohol to help spread it around. Coat thoroughly.

Pile E: Paint with slightly watered down acrylic paint. All the clay should be covered. If the inked/painted clay sticks together a little at this point, it's okay.

#2 Peppercorn-size piles



Peppercorn-sized clay piles:

Pile F: Add 5-6 drops of the alcohol inks and add isopropyl alcohol to help spread it around. Coat thoroughly.

Pile G: Paint with slightly watered down acrylic paint. All the clay should be covered. Again, if the inked/painted clay sticks together a little at this point, it's okay. Trying to separate these pieces will make you crazy so don't even try.



This is where your patience will be tested because it will take a few days for all these little pieces to dry, maybe even up to a week depending on your room's temperature. So set everything aside and work on other projects that give you immediate gratification.



*The little pieces must be completely dry before assembling the log of clay.*

## Assembling the Log

I call this a 'log' because you don't reduce it like a cane. Once assembled, gently squish it together from all angles but do NOT reduce it or roll it.



Form Pile A into a loose rectangle shape. *Gently* squish so the balls stick together.



Add *half* of Pile C distributed all over the first layer of Pile A. Add half of Pile D and *half* of pile E. Try to group Piles D and E into small piles together a little, so you have some black-painted little balls together and some alcohol ink-painted balls together.

*Hint: If you want a heavy matrix all throughout your turquoise, place small groups of the inked and painted balls evenly across the base layer.*



Add *half* of Pile F and *half* of Pile G in the same manner as with Piles D and E above. The rectangle will be taller in some places- that's how you want it.



If you're adding host rock:  
Add *half* of the host rock pile carefully over the areas where you put the black/brown painted clay.



If you're adding iron pyrite:  
Add torn sheets carefully *only* over the areas where you put the black/brown painted clay. Using a needle tool or a dry paint brush is helpful here.



Now 'reverse the assembly steps. Add the other half of the piles in reverse order, ending with adding Pile B.  
*Gently* squish all the layers of piles together so they stick together. Don't roll this log and don't reduce it, as you would a cane. It's not a cane.



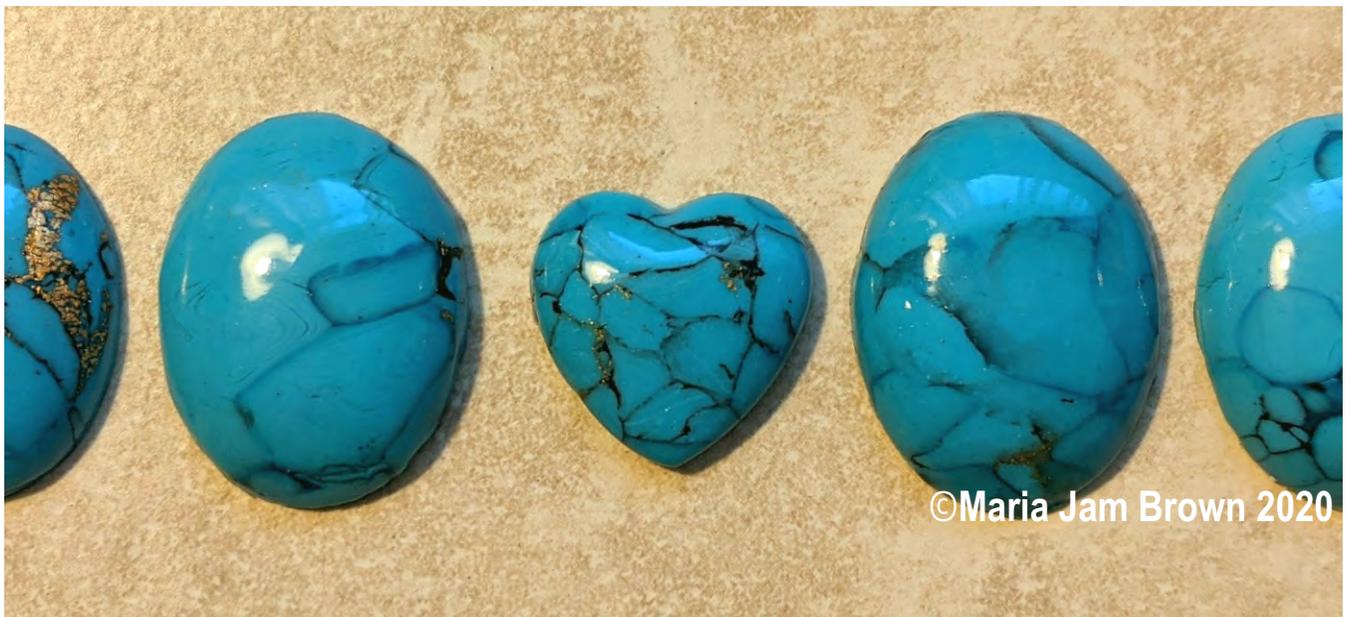


Slice the log with your sharp blade and create beads, cabochons, veneers, etc. Cure according to clay manufacturer's directions.



After curing, I like to sand away any smearing I may have done while shaping with some wet/dry sandpaper. I used Zona WetorDry Micron Graded Polishing Paper here, but you can use any wet/dry sandpaper.

Then I paint on a thin layer of translucent liquid clay and cure that with a heat gun. Alternatively, you can keep sanding and buffing your pieces to a high shine or you can coat it with a sealant, although this technique doesn't need sealant.



*These cabochons were made with Adirondack alcohol inks (Sailboat Blue and Stream), Color Technik black acrylic paint, one coat of translucent Kato Polyclay Liquid, and cat hair from three cats.*