

# SILVER CLAY BEGINNER TOOL GUIDE

**Getting into silver clay can feel a little overwhelming at first.** After spending some time working with it, I've figured out my go-to essentials — both the tools you'll actually need and some clever household substitutes that can save you money. That's why I put together this guide: to explain what each item does, share affordable alternatives, and point you toward where I got mine. I've kept the list focused on the real necessities, with cheaper options wherever possible. **Do not be put off by the quantity of things - notice how a lot of them are just household items!**

The links are just examples — depending on where you're based, you might find better deals or local suppliers. Use this as a reference to learn what each tool is called and how it's used.

**Pick links that work better for you, delivery and pricewise!**

*Some links are affiliate.*

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## WORKING WITH CLAY

### 1. ART CLAY SILVER (THE FINE SILVER .99 VARIETY)



This brand is consistently great quality and has a shrinkage rate of 8–10% (some brands have a much higher shrinkage rate of over 20%). Widely available in jewellery supplies shops, sometimes even Amazon – check your local options!

**US/International (Cool Tools website): <https://cooltools.us/products/art-clay-silver-clay?ref=ywrmmwu&variant=41108194885820>**

**UK/international (Cooksongold website): <https://tidd.ly/4nplkqp>**

### 2. CLAY HYDRATOR



A much-needed accessory to store your silver clay. Silver clay dries incredibly fast, and even if you wrap it tightly in cling film and put it back into the original packaging, I found that my clay still dried to a rock. A clay hydrator is essentially a glass jar with 2 sponges – one at the bottom and one inside the lid. Of course, you could try to make something similar yourself!

How to use: wet both sponges and squeeze excess water out; they should be damp but not drenched. Place them back into the jar. Shape leftover clay into a ball and wrap it loosely in cling film. Place it into the jar and close the lid. Keep out of direct sunlight. Done! The clay will stay perfect in there for weeks (I've gone on vacations and come back to perfect clay). Do check once in a while if the sponges have dried out and need some extra water.

**US/International (Cool Tools website): [https://cooltools.us/products/cool-tools-clay-hydrator?ref=ywrmmwu&\\_pos=1&\\_psq=clay+hydr&\\_ss=e&\\_v=1.0](https://cooltools.us/products/cool-tools-clay-hydrator?ref=ywrmmwu&_pos=1&_psq=clay+hydr&_ss=e&_v=1.0)**

**UK/international (Cooksongold website): <https://tidd.ly/4pj6vO9>**

### **3. CLING FILM (you already have it in your kitchen!)**



As above, regular kitchen cling film to wrap your clay! Get this anywhere that is convenient!

**Amazon: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Amazon-Cling-Film-75m-29cm/dp/B0CNCJ3YRM/>**

#### 4. BAKING/PARCHMENT PAPER (the one you usually use for cooking!)



As above – clay does not stick to it. You can place it over clay to roll it without sticking to the rolling pin or even use it as your work surface. You can also wrap a strip of parchment paper around the mandrel and secure it with a small piece of tape – this makes an excellent non-stick surface for your ring.

**Amazon: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Amazon-Baking-Paper-sheets-meters/dp/B0CNCN7RW4/>**

#### 5. DOCUMENT FOLDER



You don't need a specialised clay work surface. I found that regular plastic document folders (that you may already have around) are great for silver clay. Silver clay does not stick to this surface, and I find it easy to lift and bend the file to release semi-wet clay if you need to pick it up or transfer it. Bonus: since file folders are transparent, you can put a picture of a shape/design underneath as a guide for cutting or laying out your clay piece.

**Amazon: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Strong-Quality-Plastic-Project-Presentation/dp/B07CRGH5YG>**

## 6. CUTTING TOOL



An X-acto knife or a regular snap-off utility knife. You just need something relatively sharp and thin to cut your clay with precision. Any one of these knives could work!

**Amazon:**<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Modelcraft-Medium-Duty-Hobby-Knife/dp/B00VG29ANE/> or <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Coral-56301-Essentials-Decorators-Utility/dp/B01N67I5E1/>

**Kit with a knife, acrylic roller and snake roller:**  
<https://www.amazon.co.uk/AUXSOUL-Acrylic-Rectangle-Modelling-Sculpting/dp/B08LGV7YLJ/>

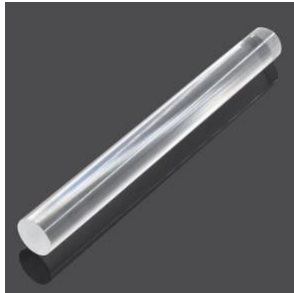
## 7. PLAYING CARDS



The cheapest way to control clay thickness. Stack a few cards on both sides of the clay, adding more/less depending on the desired thickness. Keep the clay in between these cards and roll it out – the cards will act as ‘stoppers’ so you don’t roll your clay too thin.

**Amazon:** <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Waddingtons-Classic-No-1-Playing-Cards/dp/B07VGKSRMN/>

## 8. ROLLER PIN



You need this tool to roll out the clay. An acrylic roller is the best option, but anything smooth and tube-shaped can work – even a tall glass (as long as it's not narrower/wider at any point and has no texture).

If you find that your roller sticks to the clay, place a small piece of parchment paper over the clay and roll over it.

**US/International (Cool Tools website):**

**[https://cooltools.us/products/economy-pink-roller-8-1-2?ref=ywrmmwu&\\_pos=8&\\_sid=a0e6bfb60&\\_ss=r](https://cooltools.us/products/economy-pink-roller-8-1-2?ref=ywrmmwu&_pos=8&_sid=a0e6bfb60&_ss=r)**

**UK/international (Cooksongold website): <https://tidd.ly/45XWoXE>**

**Kit with acrylic roller, knife and snake roller:**

**<https://www.amazon.co.uk/AUXSOUL-Acrylic-Rectangle-Modelling-Sculpting/dp/B08LGV7YLJ/>**

## 9. SNAKE ROLLER



This roller is for rolling out snake/sausage shapes with silver clay. Very handy when making rings, bails for pendants and other long, thin shapes. You can also use anything flat really, but transparency helps to see what you are doing. I use a plastic case from my deck of cards – whatever works for you!

US/International (Cool Tools website): [https://cooltools.us/products/work-surface-snake-maker-acrylic-narrow?ref=ywrmmwu&\\_pos=1&\\_sid=8734ac233&\\_ss=r](https://cooltools.us/products/work-surface-snake-maker-acrylic-narrow?ref=ywrmmwu&_pos=1&_sid=8734ac233&_ss=r)

UK/international (Cooksongold website): <https://tidd.ly/4hFj7M6>

Kit with a snake roller, cylindrical acrylic roller and knife:  
<https://www.amazon.co.uk/AUXSOUL-Acrylic-Rectangle-Modelling-Sculpting/dp/B08LGV7YLJ/>

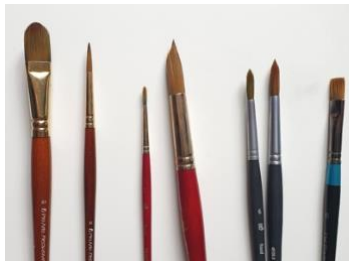
## 10.WATER SPRAY BOTTLE (any old empty one you might have!)



Useful to rehydrate the clay when it's a bit dry and cracking. Take any spray bottle, thoroughly clean it, and put some filtered water into it. If a piece of clay is a bit dry, give it a couple of sprays, mush it around, roll in your hands to distribute – repeat until the consistency is good. DO NOT drench it – if the clay becomes slippery, there's too much water. Leave it in cling film for a few minutes until it dries slightly.

Amazon:<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Atomiser-Refillable-Containers-Traveling-Essential/dp/B0BZTY3DX1/>

## 11.A COUPLE OF OLD BRUSHES



Brushes are super useful to push the clay around and rehydrate it when you need to work on it for a prolonged time. Useful to have a thin one and a bigger one. Use a DAMP brush – wet it with water and dab excess on a tissue. DO NOT use a very wet brush – you risk

making the clay too wet. Get the cheapest ones if you don't have any lying around – really doesn't matter here.

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/OWill-Watercolor-Painting-Acrylic-Crafts/dp/B092MJGYLN/>

## 12. OLIVE OIL



A tiny bit of olive oil on tools (knife, shaper) prevents them from sticking to clay. Cheap one will do.

## 13. SILICONE CLAY SCULPTING TOOLS



I like keeping a couple around to sculpt the clay.

US/International (Cool Tools website): <https://cooltools.us/products/mini-flexible-silicone-shapers-set-of-5?ref=ywrmmwu&pos=29&sid=200109f42&ss=r>

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/DSLSQD-Sculpting-Modelling-Sculpture-Decoration/dp/B0CLLN58F8/>

## 14. SANDPAPER



Once the clay is dry, you can use sandpaper to perfect the shape. You can cut it into smaller pieces, fold it to get into difficult places. I use fine 400 grit sandpaper from a **local hardware store**. You can also use 600 to 800 grit extra fine sandpaper to polish your clay (before firing) even further. The smoother the clay before firing, the easier it will be to achieve a great polish after firing.

**Amazon:** <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Sandphyrre-Sandpaper-Plastic-Paintwork-Sanding/dp/B0DWLFBGVF/>

## 15. RESPIRATOR/MASK



When sanding, it is EXTREMELY important to protect yourself. The silver clay dust flies everywhere and you do not want to breathe it in. Respirator works best, and there are budget options available, one of which I am linking below. At the very least, use a well fitted FFP3 mask.

**Amazon:** <https://www.amazon.co.uk/LAMANICE-Respirator-Chemicals-Woodworking-Formaldehyde/dp/B0DKX8CW1F/>

## 16.TWEEZERS



ANY - precision tweezers or even the ones you use to pluck eyebrows – just a useful tool to pick up small pieces or handle freshly fired pieces that are very hot! Also great for setting CZ stones into clay – easier to pick them up and place with precision.

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Pointed-Tweezers-Precision-Stainless-Electronics/dp/B0FHKXK6F6/>

## 17.GEMSTONES (CUBIC ZIRCONIA) – optional



Cubic zirconia are excellent stones for silver clay. They come in **different colours and shapes!** These stones withstand the heat of firing, meaning you can set them directly into clay and fire together. Here are a couple places where you can get them, but you can also check your local stores or Etsy.

US/International (Cool Tools website):  
<https://cooltools.us/collections/cubic-zirconia-gemstones?ref=ywrmmwu>

UK/international (Cooksongold website): <https://tidd.ly/3W3XmvB>

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## FOR MAKING RINGS



## RING SIZER & MANDREL

To measure your ring size and to build your clay ring over. NOTE: clay shrinks by volume so make the ring 2 – 4 sizes bigger than desired (thin dainty designs will shrink less than chunky ones). Use a strip of parchment paper secured with a small piece of tape. Wrap it around the desired size on the mandrel and place your clay on top of this base. This way you can take the ring off easily once it's dry. Putting clay directly on the mandrel will result in it sticking.

**US/International (Cool Tools website):**

**[https://cooltools.us/products/plastic-ring-sizer?ref=ywrmwu&\\_pos=37&\\_sid=efd8d60d0&\\_ss=r](https://cooltools.us/products/plastic-ring-sizer?ref=ywrmwu&_pos=37&_sid=efd8d60d0&_ss=r)**

**UK/international (Cooksongold website): <https://tidd.ly/46eDYAH>**

**Amazon: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Meowoo-Measurement-Measuring-Diameters-Plastic/dp/B07CVV5SYD>**

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## FIRING PROCESS



### 1. BUTANE TORCH



I use the simplest butane torch that is often used for cooking (think crème brûlée). You can get them in a hardware store or on Amazon – plenty of cheap options. You do not need to invest in an expensive jeweller’s torch at all.

**Amazon:** <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Butane-FLAMETHROWER-Welding-Ignition-Soldering/dp/B0765WWW8/>

## 2.SAFE FIRING SURFACE



You need a safe firing setup. Get whatever is easiest for you to find – a soldering block, fibre brick, or firebrick (like the ones used in pizza ovens). **Suitable materials are: ceramic fiber block, vermiculite fibre brick, or soldering block.** Sometimes it will say what temperature they are rated to withstand, 1200C is a safe bet! You can fire the clay piece directly on them. Make sure what’s underneath and around is not flammable. **DO YOUR RESEARCH** depending on your space for the safest way to do this. The picture above is how my setup looks – a large piece of firebrick with smaller pieces around it so the fire and heat are completely contained (probably an overkill, but they all came in a pack, so hey!). TEST FIRST with your torch for a minute just to make sure all is good!

**US/International (Cool Tools website):**

<https://cooltools.us/products/vermiculite-fiber-brick-4-x-6-x-1-1-2?ref=ywrmmwu&pos=1&sid=f15b6b62a&ss=r>

**UK/international (Cooksongold website):** <https://tidd.ly/3lfVSLs> (double pack) or <https://tidd.ly/3K4rPa5> (just one brick)

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# POLISHING

You can polish with polishing papers (cheaper) or with a rotary tool (preferred option).

## OPTION 1: POLISHING PAPERS



Get these if you are not ready to buy a rotary tool (but honestly, rotary tool is not that much more expensive). They usually come in varying grits – from coarse to super fine. Wherever you buy them, you’ll see the grit order by colour. Work from the coarsest paper to the finest. Spend a good amount of time polishing with each (it takes a while, but the result is worth it!). Make sure to get every side and corner.

This method has limitations – if your piece is textured, the papers won’t be able to get into all the tiny crevices. Those areas will likely stay matte and pale – the colour of freshly fired clay. The raised bits will be shiny silver. Sometimes it gives a cool effect! You can always repolish your jewellery with a rotary tool should you decide to get it after.

**US/International (Cool Tools website): <https://cooltools.us/products/3m-polishing-paper?ref=ywrmmwu&pos=1&sid=4731ae97a&ss=r>**

**Amazon: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/NOVELTOOLS-Tri-M-ITE-Polishing-Abrasive-400-8000/dp/B07CP9CCH4/>**

## OPTION 2: ROTARY TOOL

This will give you the best polish. These rotary tools aren’t super expensive and can be handy to have around the house. You will be able to get into all of the nooks and crannies. They’re ALSO very useful when filing down dry clay – faster than doing it by hand, especially when you need to reshape the piece quite a bit. These tools come with a variety of useful attachments.

### 1. ROTARY TOOL – HANDHELD



You don't need a big expensive one. I attached here a link to a very simple cheap option from Amazon. Useful if it has a 'wheel mandrel' in the set – left pic. It comes with some accessories, but we need just one more attachment for the best polish.

**US/International (Cool Tools website):**

**[https://cooltools.us/products/janglife-cordless-rotary-tool?ref=ywrmmwu&\\_pos=1&\\_sid=fd904fb9b&\\_ss=r](https://cooltools.us/products/janglife-cordless-rotary-tool?ref=ywrmmwu&_pos=1&_sid=fd904fb9b&_ss=r)**

**Amazon:**

**[https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B09CLHYG8G?ref=ppx\\_hzsearch\\_conn\\_dt\\_b\\_fed\\_asin\\_title\\_1&th=1](https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B09CLHYG8G?ref=ppx_hzsearch_conn_dt_b_fed_asin_title_1&th=1)** (I use this exact one, but plenty of similar options at similar prices)

## 2. RADIAL DISCS (3M is typically the brand name)



They have been a lifesaver for me, especially with textured pieces. They work fast and get into every little crevice! These disks are put onto a wheel mandrel that comes in the set with your rotary tool, or they are sometimes sold in a set with the discs themselves. You need at least 3 colours of these disks – yellow (coarse), blue (medium), and light green (super fine). Polish with them in this order! You do not need a polishing compound with these either.

Depending on where you live, they may be available in packs (bit more expensive but will last) or one by one (they are like £1 each). Some jewellery components shops may sell single discs. For example, Bellore Rashbel in London lets you just pick as few as you want – check your local area for jewellery supply stores!

US/International (Cool Tools website):

<https://cooltools.us/search?ref=ywrmmwu&q=radial+disc&options=Array&type=product>

UK/international (Cooksongold website): <https://tidd.ly/4nqpW64>

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## **NICE EXTRAS**

### **1.SILVER CLAY PASTE**



You can make your own or use a ready clay paste. This is excellent for joining pieces or for repairs! This is essentially the same silver clay, but in a more liquid paste-like form.

US/International (Cool Tools website): [https://cooltools.us/products/cool-tools-rejuvenate?ref=ywrmmwu&\\_pos=1&\\_psq=rejuv&\\_ss=e&\\_v=1.0](https://cooltools.us/products/cool-tools-rejuvenate?ref=ywrmmwu&_pos=1&_psq=rejuv&_ss=e&_v=1.0)

UK/international (Cooksongold website): <https://tidd.ly/47DKJwM>

### **2.CLAY TACK BY COOL TOOLS**



This solution is super useful for joining parts securely, and it is easier and faster than doing it with water. It can be used on silver clay either wet to wet, wet to dry, dry to dry, or fired to unfired. Apply a tiny amount with a brush on both pieces to be joined, then join the pieces carefully but firmly. Hold for 20–30 seconds.

You can also add a drop to a small lump of clay to create a creamy metal clay paste or slip to help join pieces, add texture, or fill gaps and cracks. Add a drop to a pea-sized piece of clay and blend with a spatula until you have a creamy consistency.

**US/International (Cool Tools website): [https://cooltools.us/products/clay-tack-for-strong-connections-and-metal-clay-paste?ref=ywrmmwu&\\_pos=1&\\_sid=280646f72&\\_ss=r](https://cooltools.us/products/clay-tack-for-strong-connections-and-metal-clay-paste?ref=ywrmmwu&_pos=1&_sid=280646f72&_ss=r)**

### 3. CLAY REJUVENATE BY COOL TOOLS



Rejuvenate liquid is perfect for refreshing dry clay; it gives a better result than adding water. To rejuvenate and refresh dried or old clay, add a drop or two as you reconstitute it. Start with a drop and work it in to see what works for you. Add more drops to increase flexibility of clay – great for designs where you need to bend clay a lot and don't want cracks.

**US/International (Cool Tools website): [https://cooltools.us/products/cool-tools-rejuvenate?ref=ywrmmwu&\\_pos=1&\\_psq=rejuv&\\_ss=e&\\_v=1.0](https://cooltools.us/products/cool-tools-rejuvenate?ref=ywrmmwu&_pos=1&_psq=rejuv&_ss=e&_v=1.0)**

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