

The Basic Shapes

Elaboration is the mother of invention, at least in this book. You need master only three basic shapes: the ball, the log or snake, and the sheet. All other processes are based upon elaborations of those shapes. Sounds pretty simple, doesn't it? From these shapes, most other patterns can be made. The formation techniques of each shape will be covered first, followed by a section with a series of more complex elaborations. Many techniques are combinations of several of the basic shapes and these will be explained as we go along.



20. Buttons by Linda Mendelson, using polka dots of laid on color. The largest buttons are 3" in diameter.

The Ball

The first basic shape is the **ball**. To roll a nice even ball shape, take a well-kneaded piece of clay and roll it between your two hands. Roll the clay in your palms while looking between them to check the roundness of the ball. Keep the ball of clay moving in a circular pattern to assure roundness. If you want to make an oval, use an back-and-forth motion between the hands. Use the cup shape of your palm to shape the oval. Don't be discouraged if your balls are not perfectly round to start, this motion is a matter of feel and takes a little bit of practice.

TECHNIQUES WITH BALLS:

Polka Dots

Polka dots are lively design elements for beads and are fun to do. They can be used to imitate "eye" beads, whose magical and mystical meanings reach forward from antiquity. Eye beads are decorated with dots or bull's-eye patterns that are meant to protect the wearer from the "evil eye". In addition, this technique illustrates two of the wonderful properties of this clay: its ability to be layered onto itself, and its ability to fuse into the preexisting color without a trace. This almost magical property allows you play all kinds of visual tricks with your beads.