STEADLEAF PRESS

MAKE / AIR-DRY CLAY & SMALL FORMS

Make a Set of Clay Gift Tags



STAMP • PIERCE • TIE

Three matching decorative tags, fourteen practical steps, a real-size wet layout and a cord plan, plus two printable records.

Before you start

A good gift tag is readable from the front, lies comfortably against wrapping paper and has a hole that does not crowd its edge. This project makes three low, rounded tags with matching lettering: FOR YOU, THANKS and a short name or initials. A fourth scrap serves as a practice piece; its result is yours to observe, not a publisher-tested specification. The tags are intended for dry indoor gift wrapping under adult control. They are not toys, jewellery, luggage labels, structural hangers, food-contact items or ornaments for children or pets.

Materials: an air-drying modelling clay suitable for small flat forms; its current maker instructions; compatible smooth work and drying surface; craft-only roller and thickness guides; rounded rectangle cutter or blunt clay modelling tool; small uppercase letter stamps; smooth blunt hollow hole cutter; ruler; scrap paper; pencil; soft cord (about 1–2 mm diameter as a planning example); scissors for adults; optional maker-compatible paint and finish. Use dedicated craft tools, not food utensils. Work on a stable table with ordinary ventilation; protect furniture and keep children and pets away from scraps, small objects and cord. Wash hands after making, and damp-wipe settled dust according to the maker's directions. Do not dry-sand or drill hardened tags for this project.

Plan the set before rolling

The printables provide a 40 mm wide × 60 mm high rounded rectangle, a 50 mm print calibration line, a letter baseline and a hole-location plan. These are WET planning dimensions only. The example hole is 6 mm across with its centre 12 mm below the top and centred across the width; the upper clay bridge is therefore 9 mm before drying. Keep the stamping field clear of the hole. Choose a larger tag or move the hole further inward if your material requires a larger bridge; redraw the letter field as necessary to retain clear separation between hole and stamps. Use a thickness that the exact manufacturer approves for a small flat object; 6–8 mm is only a starting example IF permitted. Increase thickness or choose a different exercise when the maker requires it. Select a cord only after checking the actual finished opening; 1–2 mm is a planning example, not a guaranteed fit, because shrinkage and finishing can reduce the opening. No universal bridge dimension, thickness or strength is certified.

Plan letter placement in pencil on paper first. Short uppercase words are easier to align than long names. A two-line layout (FOR / YOU) uses a 24 mm wide by 18 mm high field starting 8 mm from the left and 27 mm from the top. For THANKS, select smaller stamps that fit on one line, use a shorter message such as TA, or enlarge the tag and redraw the layout. Do not scale down the tag simply because the printout is smaller than expected: print at actual size and compare the calibration line with a ruler. A single initial is a valid alternative to a cramped word. Keep stamps shallow and the hole clear. Do not use wet clay as the test for a customer's final wording until spelling and spacing are settled.

Steps 01–02

1. Read the clay maker's directions and select the material

Check the exact brand and formulation, approved working thickness, rolling surface, tools, drying method, full-dry time and finishing options. Use an actual air-dry product, not oven-hardening polymer clay. The project uses no oven, kiln, hair dryer or heated fan. If its maker does not allow a workable small flat form or the intended hole and stamp technique, choose a different compatible clay instead of assuming the example dimensions are universal.

2. Print the plan and choose three messages

Print Pattern 1 at 100% or Actual Size, with Fit to Page turned off. Compare the 50 mm line with a physical ruler before using the outline. If it does not measure 50 mm, adjust the print settings and reprint, or draw your own measured outline on paper. Write the three names or words in Record 1. Check spelling, choose a short uppercase layout and reserve the top hole zone. Keep the paper pattern separate from wet clay unless the maker explicitly approves paper contact.

Steps 03–04

3. Arrange the working surface and tools

Choose a low stable table and a clean craft-only surface approved for your clay. Lay out roller guides, cutter, letter stamps and a smooth blunt hollow hole tool. Set the ruler and paper outside the wet area. Prepare a flat, compatible support for drying so the new tags do not have to be carried unsupported. Do not substitute kitchen equipment or a sharp improvised drill bit for a craft hole cutter.

4. Roll and check a consistent maker-approved thickness

Condition the clay only as directed and roll it evenly between suitable guides. Avoid tapered edges or thin spots around the intended holes. A planned 6–8 mm thickness is merely illustrative and applies only if permitted by your product; otherwise adapt the guide. Lift or rotate the uncut slab only when the maker approves and it is safe to do so. Keep it fully supported. Work with a small manageable quantity so leftover clay can be stored as the label directs.

Steps 05–06

5. Try a letter and hole on a scrap before making the set

On a separate small practice piece of the same thickness, test a shallow stamp impression and a clean hole while the clay is workable. Verify the stamped letter is right-reading; inspect the reverse only when it can be safely moved with full support. Check that the cutter actually clears the plug. If the scrap tears, the stamp sticks badly, or the hole collapses, stop and adjust within the maker's working guidance. Do not proceed merely because the planned hole diameter looks adequate on paper. This is the reader's preparatory practice, not a publisher-performed trial.

6. Cut three matching rounded outlines

Use a maker-approved rounded cutter, or follow a measured paper outline with a blunt modelling tool suitable for the clay. Aim for the same wet size and thickness for all three; no need to chase perfect millimetres by cutting again and again. Round vulnerable corners gently while the material is workable, without thinning the edges or adding unapproved water. Remove surplus clay without dragging the pieces. If a cut tears, rework the piece while the manufacturer allows it rather than patching a narrow edge with pressure later.

Steps 07–08

7. Lay out the letters without pressing

Place the stamps on the separate paper plan, aligned to a pencil baseline. Measure the total word width including small spaces. Centre the intended line in the 24 mm planning field, allowing extra clearance for the edges and hole zone. For a two-line message use two baselines; do not add lettering near the hole just to fit a name. Check every stamp's impression orientation on scrap. Keep the letter faces clean so they do not drag clay when lifted.

8. Stamp the messages with shallow, controlled impressions

With the tag fully supported, press each letter gently and vertically, then lift it straight up. Make the impression only as deep as necessary for legibility; avoid thinning the body, pressing through the back or rocking the stamp. Work one line at a time. If a letter lands crooked or backwards, choose to re-form the wet piece if the maker permits; repeatedly stamping over a mistake usually makes a less readable and weaker surface. Do not try to hide an error beneath a very deep impression.

Steps 09–10

9. Mark and form the hanging hole while clay is workable

Locate the hole on the centreline, using the printed plan as a reference rather than piercing through paper. For the 40 mm wide × 60 mm high example, a 6 mm hole centred 12 mm below the top leaves a 9 mm wet upper bridge. Keep the full margin; if the hole needs to move farther inward, revise the layout before stamping so it remains clear of the entire letter field. While the tag is supported on a compatible surface, press a smooth blunt hollow cutter straight through using a controlled motion permitted by the maker. Lift it gently and clear the clay plug from the tool away from the tag. Never hold the tag in your palm while piercing or force a sharp tool through it.

10. Inspect the hole and edges before drying

Check from above for a complete opening, a smooth rim, a continuous clay bridge and no visible crack or thin point. If the material can safely be moved at this stage, confirm the opening is clear from the other side; otherwise do not lift a soft tag merely to see underneath. Smooth only with an approved tool or method. Re-form or replace a cracked or deformed wet piece while the maker permits. No toothpick enlargement, cord pulling or forced widening after the clay hardens.

Steps 11–12

11. Dry the pieces flat using the exact maker's rules

Keep tags on a level, compatible support with appropriate room air and no forced heat. Follow the exact product's instructions on turning, support and complete drying. For example, STAEDTLER's FIMOair guidance specifies waiting at least 12 hours before the first turn; that instruction applies to FIMOair, not every clay. Only move a piece when both the maker's timing and its actual handling condition allow it; support the whole piece. Record actual observations, not an invented completion date. A touch-dry surface does not establish complete drying.

12. Inspect and optionally finish after complete drying

After the maker's full-dry requirements are met, inspect front, back and hole rim without bending or pulling. Reject a piece with a cracked bridge, sharp edge, fragile rim or major deformation; do not attempt to make it safe by filling the defect with paint. Optional paint or varnish must be approved for the exact clay and used according to its label, including ventilation and cure time. Keep finish out of the hole and let it fully cure before adding cord. Do not claim waterproofing, food safety or load capacity. Do not drill, dry-sand or force the opening of a hard tag.

Steps 13–14

13. Thread a soft cord without loading the hole

Choose a soft, narrow cord only after checking the actual finished opening; fold and insert the loop only if two strands pass freely. From the back, feed the folded bight gently through to the front; pass both free ends through the bight, then ease the hitch into position by hand without cinching against the rim. If it will not remain in place without tightening, use the single-strand bow instead. Alternatively pass a single strand freely through the hole and make a loose bow in the cord away from the clay. If neither passes freely, use thinner soft cord or remake the tag; do not push a tool through the dry hole. Stop if you see cracks, edge damage or a stressed bridge. No pull test is required or implied.

14. Attach to the gift and complete the record

Tie the loose cord to the wrapping ribbon so the tag rests on the package instead of carrying the gift's weight. Keep a little slack so the clay is not squeezed against the package. Complete Record 2 with spelling, visible rim condition, full-dry/finish status and cord fit. Mark PENDING if any stage is incomplete, and reject visibly damaged tags. Wrap or pad finished pieces for storage; keep dry, indoors and out of reach of children and pets. Never leave cord loops around a child's or pet's neck, or use the tag as a toy or wearable pendant. Clean the work surface using the maker's dust-control guidance.

Fix, care and preserve

A letter is unreadable. Check stamp orientation and space on the paper layout. On a workable scrap, try lighter pressure or a smaller stamp. Re-form a wet tag if appropriate, instead of carving deeper into a thin area. A single initial often reads better than a long name.

The hole is ragged or partly closed. While the clay is still workable and supported, clear the plug with the approved smooth cutter or remake the piece. Do not pry the edge sideways. A hardened opening that is too small should not be forced or enlarged for this exercise.

A crack runs from the hole to the outside. Do not attach or give away that tag. Do not disguise the crack with paint or rely on glue to restore bridge strength. Remake with an appropriate maker-approved thickness, more generous margin and lighter stamping, if suitable for your material.

The finished cord does not fit. Try a thinner soft cord that passes freely. A folded hitch requires room for two strands. A single-strand tie is an alternative. If neither works, remake; no forced insertion, drilling or dry sanding.

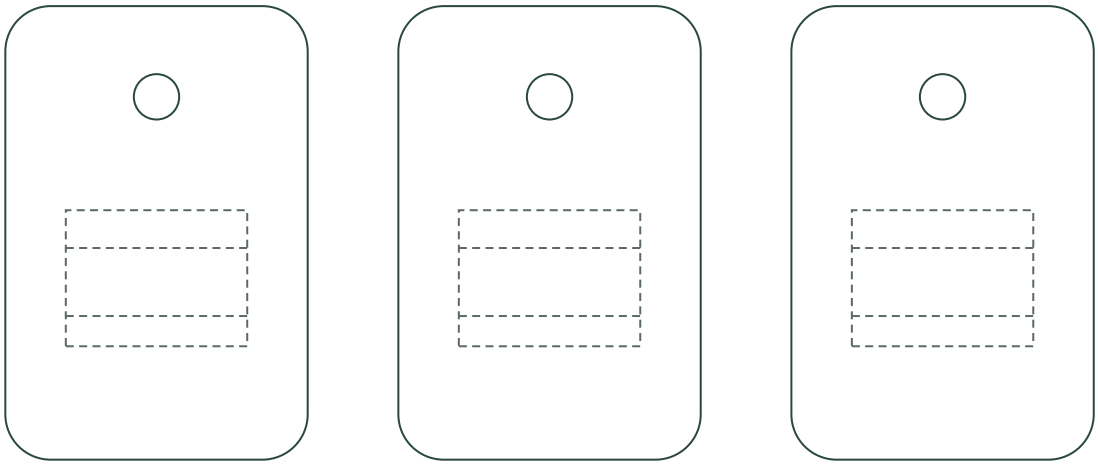
The tag curls or seems damp. Leave it supported and follow its maker's drying instructions. Do not flatten with weights, use heat or judge internal dryness from appearance alone. If the finished piece will not rest comfortably on the package, remake it rather than using cord tension to flatten it.

Source & evidence boundary

Original Steadleaf English writing, measured wet-layout plan, lettering field, cord schematic, maker records and cover illustration. STAEDTLER's manufacturer instructions provide product-specific context for rolling guides, stamping, slow drying, turning and finishing: https://www.staedtler.com/ca/en/discover/crafting-with-fimoair-air-drying-modelling-clay-made-easy/ . No manufacturer illustration, template or instructional wording is reproduced. The exact clay and finish labels govern the reader's project. The publisher has not physically made, dried, pierced, threaded, pull-tested, printed or gift-wrapped a tag. Illustrative dimensions are not a structural standard or a guarantee of strength, flatness, fit or safety.

Wet-size tag & letter layout

Print at 100% / Actual Size. Check the 50 mm line with a physical ruler. Wet layout only; the exact maker determines thickness, shrinkage and handling.



A / Two lines **B / One line** **C / Initials**

50 mm print calibration line

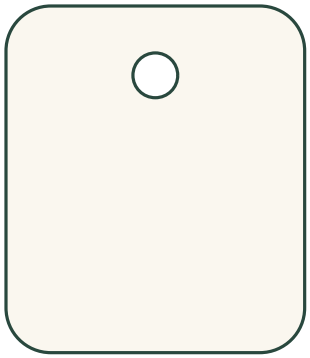
Example dimensions (before drying)

40 mm wide × 60 mm high; corner radius 6 mm. Hole Ø 6 mm, centred 20 mm from the left and 12 mm from the top. Wet upper bridge: 9 mm. Dashed lettering field: 24 × 18 mm, 8 mm from the left and 27 mm from the top. Two dotted baseline guides. These dimensions do not guarantee strength or finished fit. Redraw if your clay requires a greater margin.

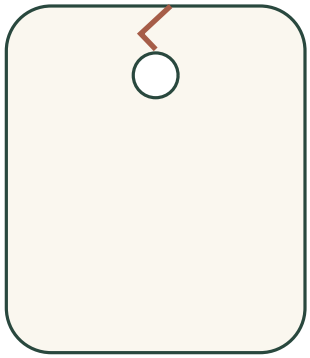
Keep paper separate from wet clay unless your maker approves contact. Do not pierce through the sheet. Use maker-approved thickness and compare the printed line before tracing or measuring.

Hole & cord path

Enlarged schematic, not to scale. Compare only visible geometry and cord clearance; no load capacity is certified.

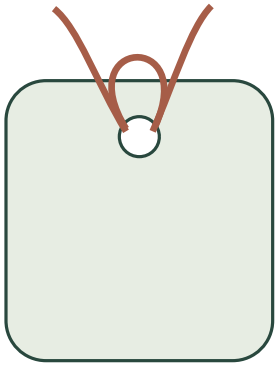


Unbroken upper bridge

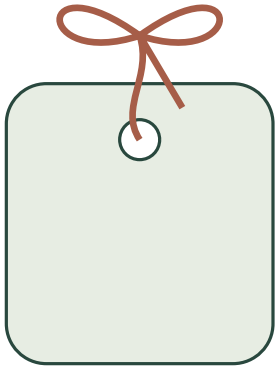


Cracked bridge: reject

After full drying and optional finish cure



Folded bight / loose hitch



Single strand / loose bow

Folded hitch: feed the bight from back to front only if two strands fit freely. Feed both ends through the bight and ease it into place, without tightening against the rim. If needed, use a loose single-strand bow away from the clay. Stop if either option needs force; use a thinner soft cord or remake the tag. Tie to the wrapping ribbon so the tag rests on the package.

Plan three matching tags

Fill in the material-specific plan before cutting or stamping. Record your own scrap observation.

Exact clay brand / formulation

Maker minimum or recommended thickness / support

Maker full-dry and turning guidance

Wet dimensions / thickness / hole diameter / position

50 mm line measured correctly? Yes / No; print setting

TAG A

Message / stamp size or width: _____

Layout / hole position / planned cord: _____

TAG B

Message / stamp size or width: _____

Layout / hole position / planned cord: _____

TAG C

Message / stamp size or width: _____

Layout / hole position / planned cord: _____

Scrap: readable letter / clean hole / reverse if safe

What changed in the plan?

Inspect, thread & record

Record real observations. READY is not a load or safety certification. If still drying or curing, mark PENDING. Reject visibly damaged tags.

TAG A

Maker full-dry date or PENDING: _____

Visible rim / bridge intact? YES / NO / UNCERTAIN

Lettering readable? YES / NO Finish / cure or NONE: _____

Cord passes freely? YES / NO Type: HITCH / BOW / NONE

Disposition: READY / PENDING / REJECT Reason: _____

TAG B

Maker full-dry date or PENDING: _____

Visible rim / bridge intact? YES / NO / UNCERTAIN

Lettering readable? YES / NO Finish / cure or NONE: _____

Cord passes freely? YES / NO Type: HITCH / BOW / NONE

Disposition: READY / PENDING / REJECT Reason: _____

TAG C

Maker full-dry date or PENDING: _____

Visible rim / bridge intact? YES / NO / UNCERTAIN

Lettering readable? YES / NO Finish / cure or NONE: _____

Cord passes freely? YES / NO Type: HITCH / BOW / NONE

Disposition: READY / PENDING / REJECT Reason: _____

Rejection, remake or change for next time

No forced cord, dry drilling or sanding, pull test, food contact, water, heat or toy use. Store dry and out of reach of children and pets.