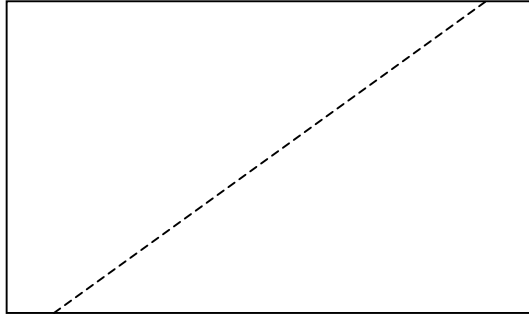


## Basic Skinner Blending

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**Polymer clay pioneer Judith Skinner developed a quick and easy way to create true gradient sheets of clay in a matter of minutes. Basic Skinner Blending and Forming into a Bull's-eye Cane (cane is the term for a millefiori construction – a design made from multiple colors of clay along a horizontal plane).**

1. Cut a 3" x 4.5" template from an index card. (Larger rectangles or even squares can be used to create a larger blended sheet). Cut out two squares of contrasting colored clay from sheets rolled through the largest setting of the pasta machine.



2. Cut each rectangle diagonally with the clay blade. For a more dramatic effect, off-set the diagonal cut 1/8" from each opposing corner. This will leave some of each original color in the center and outer layers of the Skinner Blend Cane. For a more subtle effect, make the diagonal cuts from corner to corner.

3. Stack the same color triangles, one over the other to create a double thick layer of clay. Press the stacked triangles back together to form a square. Run the clay square through the pasta machine on the largest setting. It's important to remember that the edge with two or more colors should be parallel to the rollers.

4. Fold the flattened rectangle in half and run through the largest setting of the machine. It's critical that after folding the clay, the colors along the sides are identical. This is the same for each pass needed to complete the blend. Also, the folded edge of the clay should have a large section of one color and a small section of the other. This edge is laid against the rollers before cranking.

5. Repeat Step 4, 25-30 times until a smooth color gradient appears. Remember, the key to doing this technique correctly is to fold the rectangle each time so that the colors match each along the sides, for example: white will always be folded to touch white on one side and magenta will always be folded to touch magenta on the other.

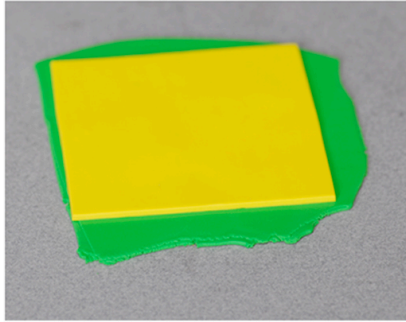
**Note:** On some machines, the clay will come out wider than when it went in. This is from being compressed during rolling. Simply fold the sheet and slightly scrunch it together to reduce the width, making it the right size to be placed back over the rollers.

6. Now it's time to stretch the gradient sheet. It will be easier to work with a short-wide cane rather than a longer-narrower one. Create this by trimming the uneven sides of the sheet. Cut the sheet in half lengthwise and stack one half over the other to create a sheet of double thickness.

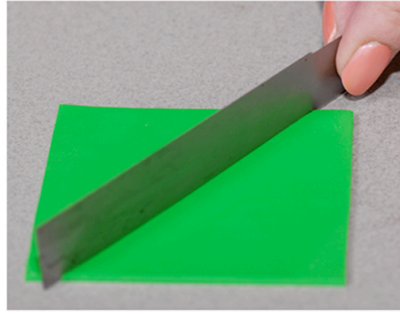
7. Roll this sheet lengthwise through the largest setting of the pasta machine. Repeat running through the pasta machine, setting the rollers to the next smaller width with each pass until you have rolled the sheet through the fifth largest setting. Some brands of clay are stickier than others and may need to be fed out a little at a time while holding the end of the strip vertically over the pasta machine. Do not let the clay sit against the back rollers guards when cranking as it will stick and tear.

8. Decide whether you wish the cane (log of clay) to go from lighter to darker starting from the center core of the cane or the opposite. Start by rolling the core color in on itself like you would a jellyroll cake. Continue rolling until the sheet is formed into a log. Air pockets can ruin a millefiori cane by creating distortion. To make starting the roll easier, make a thin snake from the clay color that will form the center core. Place this along the end of the stretched sheet and roll the clay over the snake to make it easier to start a tight, compact roll.

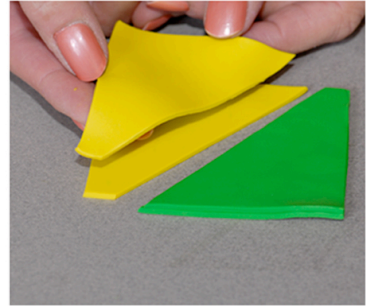
9. At the opposite end trim a straight edge, cutting away any excess or jagged clay. If the color doesn't extend all the way around the outside of the roll, add a sheet of the same color, rolled through the same setting that was used to stretch the sheet. Trim excess clay and roll to compress and remove air from the core.



STEP 2-A



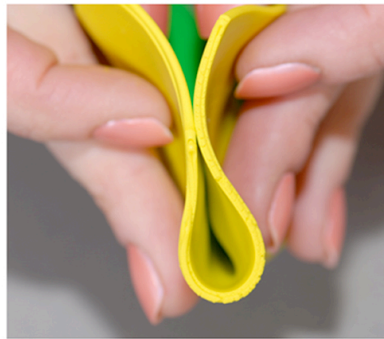
STEP 2-B



STEP 3



STEP 4



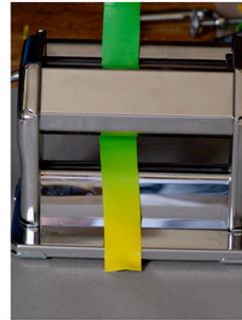
STEP 4-CORRECT



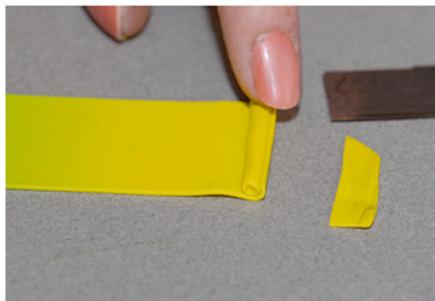
STEP 4-INCORRECT



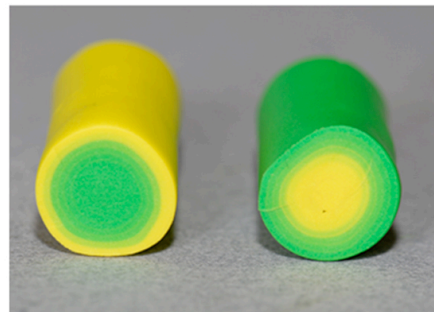
STEP 5



STEP 7



STEP 8-A



STEP 8-B