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It's fun to make games for kids (or for adults), and many different games can be made with polymer clay and the little tins that usually contain Altoid mints. As a bonus, the games are portable and the playing pieces can be stored safely inside.

These can be played anywhere but are especially good to take in the car or to a friend's or even to give to a hospitalized child, and are just the right size for stocking stuffers. (Altoids come in a much larger tin as well).



When I decided to make a tic tac toe game, it was really hard to choose just one way to make the board and the playing pieces because there are so many interesting possibilities. For this tin though, I decided to use whatever scraps of clay were lying around my work surface and the basics of Desiree McCrorey's tin-covering method.*

(I eliminated her step of covering the bottom half of the tin though since mine already had a brass finish, and also the clay rope she used to cover the join).

I began by covering the top portion of the lid with three sections of clay, but first I cleaned the metal with alcohol to remove any oils. To make the center section, I combined the yellow and black clays from one of my spiral canes, made the mixed clays into a sheet, and rolled it down onto the tin (a thin coat of white glue is sometimes used under clay on metal, but don't think I used it this time). After trimming the top and bottom of this middle section flush with the edge of the lid, I made the little positioning "nuts" so I'd know how wide the middle section needed to be.

I had decided these particular playing pieces would be "peg" style, so for the nuts I cut nine squares from a (double-thick) sheet of clay (each a little more than 1/2" square), and then cut a hole in the center of each to hold a peg (I used a plunger cutter, but a large McDonald's or Subway straw could be used instead ...twist in, then cut off portion with clay in it).

The nuts were then pressed onto the middle clay section, beginning with the center square. I rubbed the tops well with "Aztec Gold" Pearl Ex powder, then trimmed the sides of the middle section sheet so I'd have straight cuts to butt the other two sections against.

For the two side sections and their applied spiral canes I wanted to use "opposite" colors (light-dark), so one section ended up yellow/orange with cherry and black spirals, and the other purple/magenta with pale yellow, black, and olive spirals. Thin slices from the spiral canes were placed onto their respective sheets, some overlapping, then each sheet was smoothed in the pasta machine (or any roller could be used); one edge on each was cut straight so it could be easily joined to the middle section.

After coaxing all three sections together, I trimmed the whole clay top flush with the edge of the tin using an Xacto knife.

To cover the side of the lid, I cut a strip of black clay about 3/4" wide with a ruler and placed it carefully all the way around the side surface, even with the bottom, butting the raw ends on the front side (now wish I'd cut the strip a tad wider so it would create more of a "wall" on each side for the pieces not in play).

I covered the join with a pad of black clay which I pressed slightly toward the back for a secure bond (this knob makes the lid easier to open). After baking the tin at 275 for 30 minutes (I used Premo), the black clay seemed a little stark so I highlighted the top edge of the side strip and around the outer parts of the knob with gold Rub 'N Buff.

The playing pieces were each made from one oval clay ball (rolled in a wide

circle between palms), two squashed clay balls, and a small rubber washer (clay pad with hole could be used instead), which were stacked and pressed together. (Be sure that playing pieces are narrow enough for fingers to fit between during play).

For one set of five pieces I used two different reds plus black for the segments, and for the other set, two yellows plus black. The bottommost clay segment had to sit in the nut hole, so before baking I made sure this part would fit easily inside. I also pressed down on the whole stack a bit while in the nut so it would be perfectly vertical later. Then I baked the pieces at 275 for 15-20 minutes. Lastly, (though it's not necessary) I glued a bit of black felt to the inside top and bottom with GemTac white glue to protect the pieces.

There are lots of other ways to indicate where the pieces should be played on a tic tac toe board. After applying a base sheet to the tin, some possibilities might be simply putting a cane slice in each of the nine positions, onlaying some tiny ropes in a grid, using a baked clay ball or other shape to make a depression in the base sheet to hold each playing piece (if it's thick enough), making a mosaic with nine prebaked tiles pressed into a raw sheet, etc.; the playing pieces can simply sit on the surface or rest in indentions of some kind. Of course, you could always mix media and bake (or later glue on) non-polymer items as well.

And what about a theme for the board and pieces? . . .a favorite hobby, interest, sport, holiday, season, a nursery rhyme or favorite book/story, spirals large and small, having all parts be geometric or sculpted or metallic or monochromatic...just anything at all! Try it out, and have fun.

Diane Black

[Glass Attic, polymer clay "encyclopedia"](#)

*I have more information on ways to cover Altoid tins (including Desiree's method and a one-sheet method), as well as photo examples and other ideas for tins, on the "Covering" page at my website. To go there, [click here](#), then click on the "Metal" sub-category.

There are also ideas for other games to make with polymer clay on [this page](#).