

How To Make Candles

It's a good idea to cover your work area with newspaper or waxed paper--dried wax can be difficult to remove from some surfaces. And don't plan on pouring wax over your kitchen sink--if you spill the wax, it'll stop up the drain.

Be aware that wax is flammable at high temperatures. Wax while it is heating should never be left unattended. **Note: It should also never be heated to the point that it sputters or smokes.** If it should catch fire, cover it with a lid and turn off the stove. Never pour water on a wax fire.

Prepare a mold

Professionals use precise, expensive molds made from very durable materials, but you don't have to. You can create a mold with a variety of disposable food or beverage containers that you can reuse and give a new usefulness. Some guidelines:

- **Make sure** the mold has a mouth that's wider than the base so your candle can slide out easily.
- **Oil the inside of the mold** with vegetable oil. This will allow for easy removal--you don't want to have to gouge out your newly wrought creation.
- **Don't use soup cans**--they have ridges that will prevent the removal the finished candle.

Set up your double boiler

Wax should never be heated directly in a pot; instead always heat wax indirectly with a double boiler. Since wax can be difficult to remove from pots, you'll probably want to improvise a double boiler with a coffee can in a pot of water.

- **Put a medium-sized pot** on the stove, filled with a couple of inches of water, on high heat.
- **Place** a clean coffee can in the water while it is heating.

- **There should always be some water in the pot**, but not so much that it floats the can around. Eventually the combined weight of the can and the wax will be heavy enough to keep the can from bouncing around in the water.

Melt the paraffin (Wax)



While your water is warming up, you can start placing the wax in the coffee can. If you prefer, you may use old candles, or a combination of paraffin and old candles.

- **Measure the wax:** figure 1/4 pound of wax per orange juice container.
- **Cut up the paraffin into small chunks**, and place it in the can. If you're using old candles, choose colors that will mix well. You'll also want to remove any charred wick ends.

- **Stir** with an old spoon or Popsicle stick. If there are any old candles in the mix, take a fork and pull out any old wicks that have been freed from the old candles.

Color the wax (Optional)

Crayons are the best way to color candles. One candle per 1/4 pound of wax provides a deep, rich color. Mix different colored crayons and see what you can come up with. Combining half of a white crayon in with half of a colored crayon makes a softer color. Nice effect!

- Break crayons into small pieces.
- When the wax is nearly melted, drop the crayons into the coffee can.
- Stir to mix color thoroughly.

Make your own wicks

- Cut thick cotton string about three inches longer than your mold will require.
- When your wax is melted, dip cotton string in wax.
- Hang your wicks from a clothesline or place them on waxed paper, being sure to lay them out in a straight line so you'll have nice straight wicks when you need them later.
- Scent your wicks: If you are making your own wicks, you have the option of scenting the wicks rather than the candles. Before dipping wicks in wax, soak the wicks in a fragrance or perfume

Pour the wax

Remove the can from the boiling water. You'll want to use a pot holder or a kitchen cloth for this. Let the wax cool for a minute or two before being poured into the mold.

- Tilt the mold slightly, towards the can. This will improve the chances of neat, spill-free transfer.
- Pour wax slowly into the mold. Leave a little space at the top edge--it'll make candle removal easier.



Insert the wick

You'll need a pencil to lay across the mouth of the mold in order to hold the wick in place while the wax hardens.

- **Measure the wick.** Take the wicks and lay them along the length of the mold. Add an extra 3/4 inch of string for the protruding section of wick, plus an extra inch or two to wrap around the pencil.
- **Insert the wick** into the center of the mold. Notice the amount of wick that remains outside the mould. If you have an extra five inches, the wick hasn't reached the base of the candle.



- **Wrap** the end of the wick around the pencil. This holds the wick in the center of the wax while it cools.

Most candles need at least a day before you remove them from the mold. Even though your candle may look hardened, the wax inside is probably still not solid. Don't rush the cooling process, or your fine efforts will be undone.

Remove the candle from the mold

Be patient while removing your candle, or it might be damaged by your hastiness.

- **For paper molds** such as a toilet paper core or a milk carton, simply tear the paper away from the candle.
- **For molds of other materials**, try turning the mold upside down and tapping the bottom of the mold.
- **If the candle doesn't slide out**, carefully insert a knife between the candle and the mold. Jiggle the knife into that space, prying very slightly (just a little bit) against the side of the mold. If it still won't slip out, insert the knife into the opposite side of the mold and do some more jiggling.
- **If your candle still won't budge**, immerse the mold in very hot water for a few seconds. This will slightly melt the outside of the candle and it should slide out.

Insert wick, method 2

Some molds require that the wick be inserted after the wax is hardened and removed from the mold, such as sand mold candle or a gelatin mold candle.

- **Remove** the candle from the mold.

- **Heat an ice pick or a length of straight, thick wire**--a straightened wire hanger might work well here--over an open flame from a stove or...a candle. If you're using a wire, be sure to wrap the end with a cloth or hold it with a pot holder so you don't get burned.

- **Insert the heated pick or wire** through the body of the candle. If it cools and stops melting the candle, simply reheat it and continue melting through the candle.

- **Insert the wick** into the hole you've just created.

- **Pour a small amount of melted wax** on the top of the candle to secure the wick if it seems loose. Once the candle is lit, any gaps between the wick and the body of the candle will be filled in with melting wax.

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