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## DIY Kids Knitting Needles with Melanie Falick

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### Chapter 1 - Introduction

#### Intro

- I learned to make these bright, beautiful knitting needles from my friend Barbara Albright. We made them together for this book called Kids Knitting, which I wrote. I'm going to teach you how to prepare wooden dowels and how to make beads out of polymer clay in order to make your own needles. I have lots of knitting needles that I've purchased and been given, but I have to say, when I knit with the ones that I made myself, I feel a wonderful sense of self sufficiency. And when kids do it, I think they feel the same way. ^*(gentle instrumental music)* *(gentle instrumental music)*

### Chapter 2 - Materials

#### Materials

- To make these knitting needles, you'll need a wooden dowel. It should be either 3/16 of an inch or 1/4 inch in diameter. You'll need a saw, a pencil, a measuring tape, and a pencil sharpener, and sandpaper. That's all for the needle section. Then you'll also need Fimo clay, or Sculpey clay, any kind of polymer clay, really. You'll need some craft glue. You need a baking sheet, mineral oil, a paper towel, and then parchment paper or wax paper to protect your surface while you're working. You'll also need access to an oven.

### Chapter 3 - Making Needles

#### Prepare dowels

- The first step in making these knitting needles is cutting your wooden dowel. That is, if you didn't have it cut for you at the hardware store. This is the only step in the process that you'll not want your children to do, or you definitely wouldn't want them to do unattended. I'm gonna start by using my measuring tape to mark 10 inches. Right here. And then I'm gonna mark another 10 inches from there, because I want to make a pair of knitting needles to work with, there we go. Once I have it marked, I can use my saw to start cutting it. And basically I'm doing it over a sink here, which is really handy for the sawdust and everything, but if you're doing it at home and it's a nice day, you can certainly do it outside. If you have to do it inside, and you're not doing it over a sink, then obviously you want to put down some newspaper or something, to protect the floor from the sawdust. So, it's usually good to make a groove, and then just keep on sawing. I have to admit, I'm not the best at sawing, so you probably don't need my advice. Here we go. Okay, we've got the first one done. It's fine that it's fallen in the sink. And I see my mark. I'm gonna try to make a better groove this time. Now, this is a quarter inch dowel, and that's gonna make a size 10 knitting needle. You can also use a 3/16ths of an inch dowel, and that will make a size eight knitting needle. So if you are following a pattern, and it calls for an eight or a 10, you're totally set with these needles. We're gonna make the points of these needles by putting them into the pencil sharpener. So you really can't make knitting needles at home that are too fat, because if the dowel doesn't fit in the pencil sharpener, you can't, you're gonna have some trouble. There we go, got two of them. And now, take your dowels out of the sink. Today, I'm only making one pair, so I'm all set. But if obviously, if you were making more than one pair, then now is the time to measure your dowel and cut additional pairs.

## Chapter 4 - Adding Needle Toppers

Create polka dot balls

- To start making the polka dotted balls the first thing you need to do is preheat the oven to whatever temperature it says on the package for your polymer clay. I've already preheated my oven to 275. I'm gonna take the two colors of polymer clay that I've chosen and I'm gonna put them on this parchment paper. The parchment paper is here just to protect the surface. I think I'm gonna make a blue ball with green polka dots. So I'm gonna pull off some polymer clay. I wanna end up with about a ball that's about 1/2 inch in diameter, maybe a little bit smaller than that. So I'm just gonna start rolling and when I have a ball I look at it and I think oh, that looks a little bit too big. The thing is you don't want the balls to be too big, because they'll get heavy and then the knitting needles won't be that much fun to work with. I have a nice little ball here, so I'm gonna set that down, and I'm gonna pick out my polka dot color, which is this bright green. I always like making knitting needles with bright polka dots, but you can use whatever color you want. And then you're gonna make a series of teeny tiny little balls. And I have to say I was doing these with my friend Hannah and she worked with a lot of polymer clay when she was a kid and she made all of her little balls in advance. And because I think she's a pro at polymer clay now I use her technique, instead of making one little ball and sticking it on. But obviously you can do whatever you want. The polka dots get pretty big, pretty fast, so I'm actually gonna take the balls that I made and make them even teensier. But you can, again, do whatever it is you want. You can even use more than two colors of polymer clay, you can make your specks or your balls big or small. I will warn you that if you make these perfect little circles for your polka dots once you try to put the polymer clay, the soft clay, on the dowel, which is the next step, they get a little bit distorted. And I know sometimes I get a little disappointed, because I think oh, they look so cute here in these perfect little circles, perfect little polka dots, but they look cute when they're a little distorted too. And I think, if you practice, you could probably do a pretty good job of making them perfect circles. But I find that my technique isn't that precise, so I have to learn to love the imperfections. I find that a lot of kids like to play with polymer clay and actually a lot of adults like to do it also. So if you get a group of kids or kids at heart together you can make a lot of knitting needles and play with all the different colors of polymer clay. And it's interesting to see who leans towards particular colors and who likes the bright ones, who likes the dark ones. All right, so we have a nice ball here with these pretty round dots. I'm just going to roll this on the surface to smooth out the place on the ball where the polka dots are adhered. There's no perfect way to do it, it will work no matter what. Okay, so now I have my dowel. The ends of the dowel might be a little bit jagged from the saw, that's fine, you don't need to worry about it. Just pick one of the ends and find a place in your ball and then just gently insert the dowel into it. You want the dowel to be pretty much in the center of the ball and you want it relatively deep, but you don't wanna go all the way through, so that you poke a hole. But if you do poke a hole then you can just redo it. So then, because I want this to be somewhat round. They always have this tendency at this point to look like mushrooms, just because they get sort of squished like a mushroom shape, which is also fine. Just get it to the point where you're happy with it. And let's see, I think I need maybe two more polka dots for that one. So I'll quickly do that. Let's see, I think there's room for one more. Then I'll just kind of do a little sculpting here, be the artist. Then I'll just place it on my baking sheet with the ball end off the baking sheet. And then I'll just make another one just like it. You can choose to make the ends of your needles the same color, in this case I would do blue with green polka dots, or I could do green with blue polka dots, or I could pick a totally different color. When you're making your own knitting needles you get to do it your

own way. When you put your knitting needles on your baking sheet you want the ends to be hanging off slightly and this is gonna protect them from getting dented by the baking sheet. Then you're gonna put it in the oven. The temperature is based on what the manufacturer recommends on the package. It's usually around 250 or 275 degrees, and you usually do it for about 15 to 30 minutes, but make sure that you check your packaging to follow the directions for the brand of clay that you have.

### Finish

- My polka dot balls were done in 20 minutes, so I took them out of the oven, and now I've let them cool, and now I can finish making my knitting needles. So the first thing you do, which might seem a little counterintuitive, is you take the ball off of the dowel. The only reason we put them on the dowel when we were baking was so that the hole would be the exact right size. And when you were baking your knitting needles, the ball might've even fallen off, and that's okay, it's not a problem at all. So I'm gonna separate the balls from the dowels, and now, this is actually my favorite part, I'm gonna sharpen the dowel in the electric pencil sharpener. And people always say, like, "Really, that works?" And it really does work. So obviously you're gonna wanna check fairly regularly to see where you're at. I think this needs just a couple more seconds. So here I think it's about done. You don't have to worry or be too picky about this, you want it to just sort of approximately look like a dull pencil. If it gets too sharp, you can always sand it and make it soft. If it's sort of not pointy enough, you can put it back in the sharpener. So I'll do the other one quickly. Perfect. Okay, so now that that's done, I'm gonna take my sandpaper, and I'm going to sand the dowel. This is gonna make a little bit of sawdust, so if you're worried about your work surface, you can put the parchment paper back down. I'm not too worried because I'm right here near the sink. So basically you want them smooth enough so that when you're knitting, that you don't have to worry about any splinters, and you just don't have to worry about it feeling rough in your hands. I like to treat the point on my paper, just like this. You should probably check the end of the dowel. If it's the end that you sawed, and it's jagged, you'll wanna smooth that out a little bit. I think that's good. Now I'll just do the other one quickly. I'm kind of always amazed at how quickly these needles come together. And that's always a good thing if you're working with children, of course. Okay, check the end. It's smooth. Okay, so that's done. Sweep that away. Okay, so now we're ready to smooth out the needles a little bit more. Just take a paper towel, put a little bit of mineral oil on it. You can also use lemon oil or lavender oil. This is just an extra step to make your needles smooth, so that when you're knitting, you have a pleasant experience. So this is all pretty easy to do. With kids you probably just wanna make sure that they don't spill the oil. You wouldn't want them to go crazy with the oil, because now you're gonna glue the balls onto the dowels, and if they're soaked in excessive oil, that might be a problem. Okay, so now, you take one of the balls, you open your glue. My friend Hannah came up with this trick. Instead of squeezing the glue out into the hole in the ball, take your dowel and kinda look how much glue is in there, and just when you feel the dowel touch the surface of the glue, take it out, clean it off a little bit. Oops. And then dip your dowel in. And clean off any extra glue there. Make sure it's secure, and then put it in with your other needles, or in whatever pitcher you have. Then we do the second one. Dip it in. Try not to have too much excess there. If you do, you can just wipe it off quickly. We're set. Place it upright in your jar to dry. You can't knit with them right away, but you will be able to knit with them in probably 30 minutes or so, to be safe. But I'm so excited about making my own knitting needles that I'll just cast on with my Kool-Aid dyed yarn and start knitting. I can't tell you how really exciting it is to knit with your own tools, and how

especially exciting it is to see the smiles on the kids' faces when they make their own tools and learn how to knit.