



BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SOAPMAKING: MELT AND POUR

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We are going back to the basics! Here is a free beginner's guide to the art of Melt and Pour soapmaking that includes a step-by-step guide through a beginner's melt and pour project in this part. Interested in cold process soap? Click here for a free comprehensive guide to Cold Process soapmaking. And, bonus, downloadable PDFs make these guides a handy take-anywhere tool.

What's the difference between Melt & Pour (M&P) and Cold Process (CP) soap? Melt and Pour (M&P or MP) utilizes a pre-made base that is ready to use as is (literally, you could take the melt and pour block, as-is, get in the shower and lather away!). But this block of unassuming plain soap is waiting for your personal touch to transform into something amazing. Cold Process soap is made by mixing or saponifying lye and oil and the resulting chemical reaction is soap. With M&P base - the saponification and waiting step has been done for you while with CP, you do it yourself. It's similar to using a cake mix (melt and pour) versus from scratch (cold process).

MELT AND POUR: Melt and pour soapmaking is the process of melting a preexisting soap base, most often adding color and fragrance or essential oil, then pouring the soap base into a mold. Once fully hardened, the result is a bar that is able to be used right away. Benefits of melt and pour soap include not having to handle lye, the wide variety of color and fragrance options available, kid friendly process, and no curing time. One downfall is that because of the additives in melt and pour to make it easily re-meltable and the lack of curing time, melt and pour soap does not last quite as long in the shower as cold process can. Because melt and pour soap is already made and the process is relatively easy, users are able to focus on the design of the soap. Most novelty soaps are made using MP techniques.



VOCABULARY:

SOAP BASE: The actual melt and pour itself. Melt and pour in it's original, uncolored state is clear. Many vendors offer an opaque or white base option as well, which is simply clear base with white colorant (titanium dioxide) already added for you. Other popular additives include Goat Milk and Shea Butter. Keep in mind that additives can also affect the color of the soap base; for example, Goat Milk soap base tends to have an opaque ivory color, where an Aloe or Hemp base may be clear but with a greenish tint and a Honey base may have a clear but dark yellow appearance. Additionally, the base color will affect any additional colorant you wish to add to the soap. Any color added to a white or opaque base will be pastel, and colors added to the greenish or yellowish bases mentioned will be affected by the color of the base as well.

GLYCERIN: A natural bi-product of the saponification process, found in both MP and CP soaps. Glycerin is found in a particularly high percentage in MP soap, and MP soap bases may also be found under the name glycerin soap base. Glycerin is a humectant, which means it attracts moisture. It's humectant properties in soap contribute to a super moisturizing and skin-loving bar. Most commercial soaps have had the glycerin (and thus all of its properties) removed, which may be why many people prefer melt and pour or cold process soaps to commercial soaps.

FRAGRANCE: The product you scent your soap with, this can either be a fragrance oil (synthetic) or all natural (essential oil). Take care to only use soap or skin safe fragrances. Do not use potpourri, craft or candle fragrances as they have not gone through the same safety testing. Suggested usage rate for fragrance or essential oils in melt and pour soap is .25 ounces of fragrance or essential oil per pound of soap. Please read through all the safety and warning instructions from your vendor with essential oils. Some of them, like Peppermint or Spearmint, have a 'cooling' sensation when used in soap (and on nether regions) and others can warm up, like Clove or Cinnamon.

COLORANTS: This is the medium you use to get color in your soap. There are many options to color your soap, not all of them cosmetic grade. For example, while crayons and RIT dyes are technically 'non-toxic' they have not been tested nor approved for use in soap or cosmetic products. You only want to use specially designated colorants for use in your soap. Common colorants include Oxides and Pigments, Liquid Colorants, LabColors, Color Blocks, Micac and Clays. Note: the clays used for soap are not the same as used in pottery. They have been purified to a higher grade than pottery clays. The term "non-bleeding" is often used with regards to colorants. Non-bleeding simply means the color will not migrate or bleed into other parts of your soap. For more information on non-bleeding, click here.

MOLDS: This is what you will pour your soap into. You can use any container that is fully cleaned and has 'give'. Example: a plastic tupperware would work; a glass bowl would not. You need to be able to release the soap from the mold easily by pulling gently on the side of the mold. Common molds used in melt and pour are Heavy Duty Molds, Milky Way molds and Silicone molds.

SAFETY: When soap bases are melted, they are generally over 120 degrees, which turns the soap into a scalding hot liquid burning hazard. Be extremely careful about only soaping with heat safe containers and equipment. If you soap with children around, they should be old enough to hold their own containers and should always have an adult with them during the soapmaking process. Hot soap can hurt if dripped or splashed on skin.

EQUIPMENT: Pyrex or other heat-resistant containers, spoon, Silicone Loaf Mold



RECIPE: Plumeria Layered Soap

40 oz Clear Melt and Pour Soap Base

15 oz White Melt and Pour Base

Diluted Tropical Pink LabColor

Diluted Tropical Orange LabColor

Super Pearly White Mica

1.1 oz Plumeria Fragrance Oil



STEP ONE: Cut the melt and pour soap base into (approximately) 1 inch chunks. Keep the white soap base and clear soap base separate.



STEP TWO: Melt the clear soap base in the microwave on 30 second bursts, stirring between bursts, until the base has fully melted.



STEP THREE: Add 2 heaping mini-scoops of Super Pearly White Mica to the melted clear soap base and mix well. The Super Pearly White mica helps to give the soap base a nice shimmer, which adds dimension to the colors we'll add in the next couple of steps. Use Isopropyl (Rubbing) Alcohol to disperse any mica clumps, they usually float to the top.



STEP FOUR: Add 0.8 oz Plumeria Fragrance Oil and stir until incorporated. Split the soap base into two equal parts, each weighing 20 ounces.

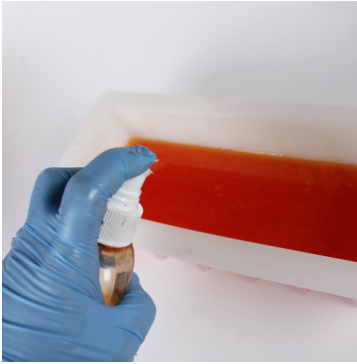


STEP FIVE: To one 20 ounce portion, add 3 mL Diluted Tropical Pink LabColor and mix well. To the second 20 ounce portion, add 5 mL Diluted Tropical Orange LabColor and mix well.



STEP SIX: For a super even look, I measured out the soap amounts for each layer. If you'd like a more uniform look, split the Orange and Pink colored soap bases into two portions, each weighing 10 ounces. For a more organic look, no need to split the batches, just eyeball the layers.

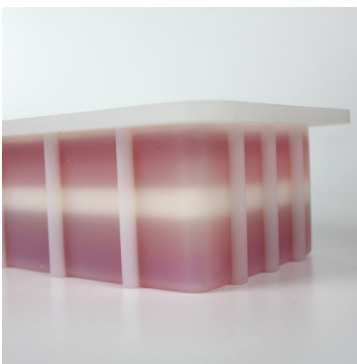
STEP SEVEN: Pour the first layer of Pink soap base into the mold, spray with alcohol to pop any bubbles on the surface, and allow to harden.



STEP EIGHT: Check the temperature of the orange soap. If the orange soap is 125 degrees or below, spray the pink layer with alcohol again, which will help the layers to stick together. Pour the first layer of orange soap. Spray again with alcohol to pop those bubbles and allow to harden. TIP: When pouring layers, the temperature is important; pouring too hot can result in the first layer melting, which can result in an undesired effect.



STEP NINE: Heat the White Melt and Pour Soap Base in a heat-safe container on 30 second bursts in the microwave until fully melted. Add 2 heaping mini-scoops of Super Pearly White Mica and 0.3 oz Plumeria Fragrance Oil and mix well. Adding mica to an opaque base will add just the right amount shimmer, making the white extra special. Keep in mind that any color added to a white or opaque base will result in a pastel version of that color!



STEP TEN: Once the white soap base has reached a cool enough temperature, spray the orange layer with alcohol and pour the melted white soap base. Spray again with alcohol and allow to harden. Repeat with another orange layer next, and finish it off with a final pink layer, being sure to check the temperature of the melted soap before pouring the layer.



STEP ELEVEN: Allow to harden for a few hours. Unmold and cut.