



Gum Ball Baby

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Photography by Sam Stringer

The angelic innocence of this whimsical baby will delight the hearts of both young and old. The simplicity of these gum ball babies make them perfect for showers and birthdays. With a few minor changes they can be converted into a clown, Santa, elf or any number of cute figurines for numerous occasions. The same technique can also be used to reproduce whimsical animals. You can control the size of your figurine by the

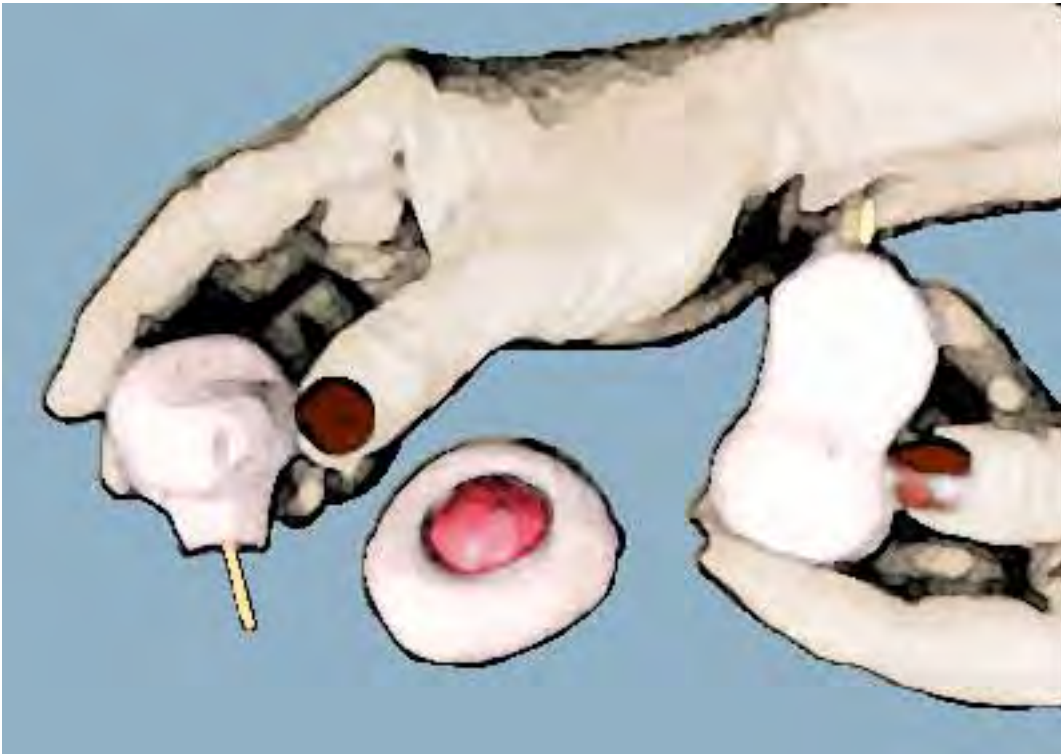
size of the gum ball as they come in a variety of sizes from tiny to huge. Even suckers work well to form the bodies.

You can use gum paste or fondant to form your figures. I normally use fondant and add two teaspoons of tylose powder to strengthen it. Mix the tylose into the paste and allow it to cure overnight in a plastic bag before you use it. Color a large ball of paste flesh color. Separate the large ball into 4 balls. One ball should be the same size as the gum ball you are using and 3 balls should be twice the size of the gum ball. Cover the balls to prevent drying



Torso: Roll one large ball until it is perfectly smooth. Hold the ball in the palm of your hand and press a gum ball into the paste until you can feel it firmly against your palm. Work the paste up over the ball. Continue to work upward in a torso shape and smooth with your fingertips. Insert a piece of heavy spaghetti that will later aid in supporting the head. Use a skewer or other rounded object to make a crease for the little baby bottom.

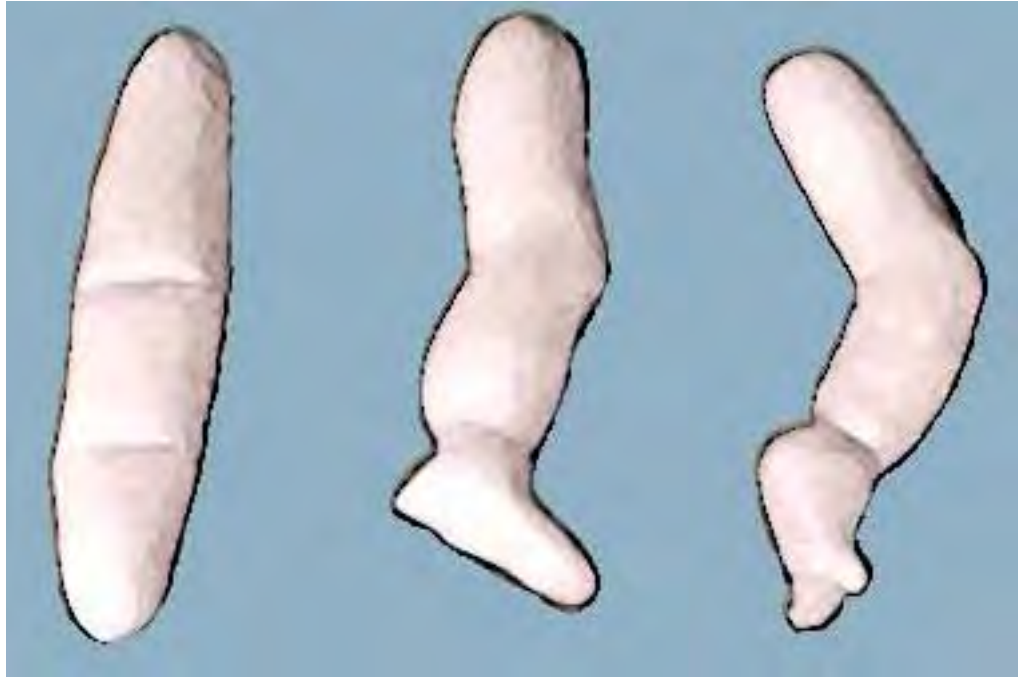
Belly Button: Push a small ball tool or the end of any small rounded object into the tummy area and pull down slightly to form the navel. Set the torso aside to dry overnight.



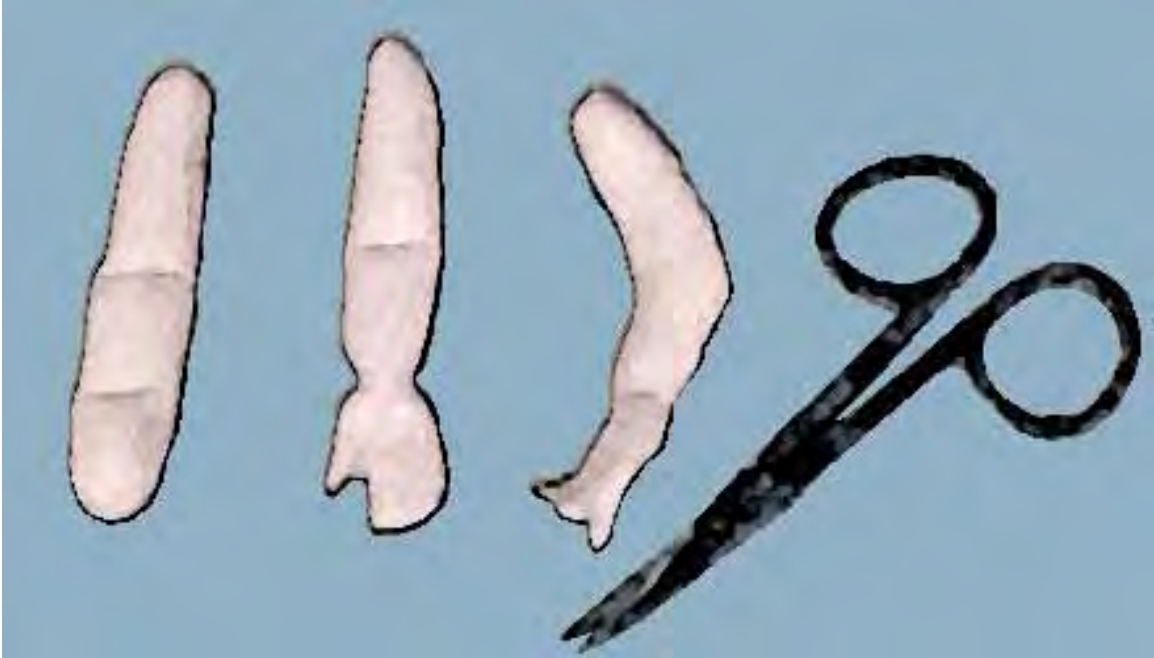
Head: Roll the second large ball until smooth. Repeat the process of incorporating another gum ball (same size) into the paste. Cover the ball, working the excess paste to the neck where it can be trimmed. Flatten the area of the head where the eyes will be and this will help to form a bulge for the puffy cheeks.

Mouth: Shape the mouth exactly the same as you did for the navel. If you use a pacifier as in the baby picture, you will not need to form the mouth but add the pacifier with a touch of royal frosting.

Legs: Divide the third large ball into 2 equal parts so the legs will be the same size. Cover one half to prevent drying and roll a very smooth ball with the other half. Roll the ball into a log. Divide the log in half lengthways and score lightly with the dull side of a knife. This mark will later be the back of the knee. Divide the log in half below the knee and thin for the ankle. Flatten the foot area and shape. Form the heel, cut the toes and bend the knee. Flatten the hip area to attach to the body. Repeat this process for the second leg being careful to have a right and left foot. You will need to decide at this point how you will position your legs on the finished figurine and prop to dry in that position.



Arms: Divide the small ball of gum paste into 2 halves. Cover one half. Repeat the process described for the legs – ball – log – mark in half for the elbow – mark in half again for the wrist area. Thin the wrist and flatten the hand. Cut a “V” shape from the hand to form the thumb. Cut the fingers, roll slightly to thin and curve to shape. Flatten the shoulder area. Repeat the process for the second arm, being careful to have a right and a left hand. Prop in the correct position and allow drying.



Assembly: Connect the legs to the body with royal frosting.

Diaper: Cut a large triangle from a pastel color for the diaper. Put the diaper on the baby allowing it to droop in the back to show the baby bottom. Twist the sides and position the baby on a cake board.

Attach the head and secure with royal frosting and allow drying.

***Note – if the figurine is for display only, it is a speedier process to use a glue gun.**
The arms can also be attached with royal but it is necessary to prop into position until the drying process is complete.

Eyes: Paint the eye area with bright white food color. Paint the iris with either blue or brown food color when the white is dry. When this is dry, add a black pupil. Outline the upper half of the eye and add 2 or 3 eyelashes.

Hair: Form a cup shape with the desired hair color paste. Lay the colored paste in the palm of your hand and push a gum ball into it to form the cup shape. Remove the gum ball and place the cup over the head of the baby. Secure the hair with a small amount of royal frosting. Form hair lines with a modeling tool or the dull side of a table knife. Add curls or pony tails for little girls.

I use the gum ball for several reasons. First they take up a lot of space and are less expensive than gum paste; Second, this is a good way to achieve consistency in size; and third, large pieces of gum paste often explode and using the gum ball prevents this from happening. Several years ago I had the opportunity to take a modeling class from Leticia de Cerro of Argentina. She makes the most fantastic figurines I have ever seen with cold porcelain over Styrofoam balls. I was so impressed with her work that I searched for a method to create something similar that would be totally edible and this is what I came up with. They are so much fun and imagination is your only limitation!