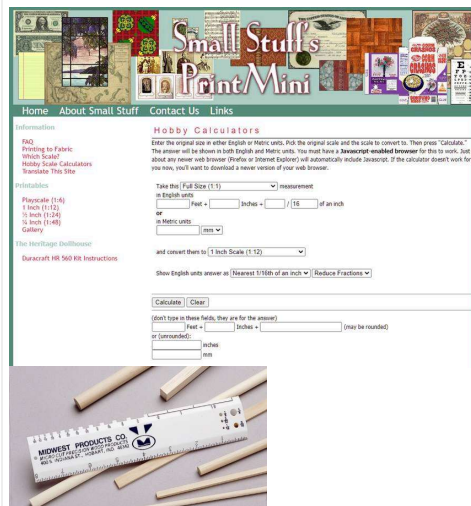


## February Challenge Submissions

These are the entries for our February Challenge. Enjoy seeing what tools your fellow miniaturists can't do without!



Linda Patterson shares the following 2 tools with us.

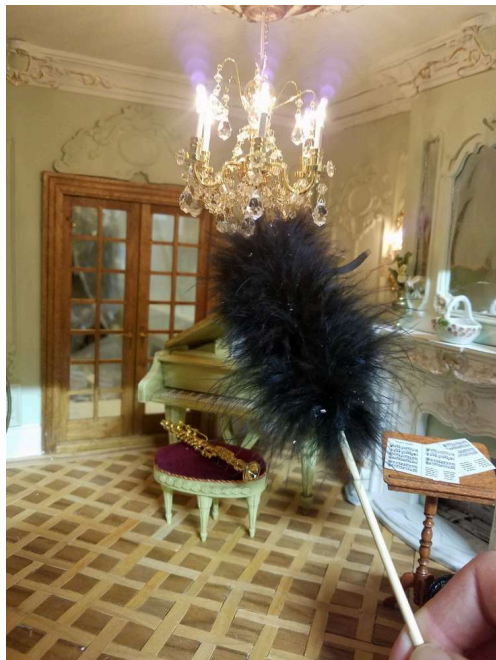
In response to the tool challenge, I have to admit I am math challenged. My #1 favorite tool is a web link to help me figure out proper scale measurements at:

<https://www.printmini.com/calc.html>

It takes you to the page shown below and you just fill in the blanks and get your answers.

My favorite physical tool is the ruler (shown below), from Midwest Products. Again my math challenge is helped as it features slots for measuring thickness from 1/16" to 1/2" and holes for measuring dowels and rods from 1/16" to 1/4". It is a lot easier than finding the fraction on the ruler and not losing my place transferring onto my project.

I can't remember where I purchased it.



Carin Shapiro shares

One of my favorite tools is very simple...a feather duster made to size to clean my mini houses. It was purchased at a Karen Aird sale in NJ a few years ago...sorry, I do not know the seller.



Laura Reich shares this tool with us.

I joined the small scale group in late July, and took part in two of the 'virtual' classes held in the fall. One supplied me with this 'dental pick', and I have used it for EVERYTHING ever since! It's great for slitting open that cellophane wrapper on new acrylic paints, remove glue that has oozed out, even for glueing very small edged, helping to poke out small pieces from the laser wood, poking holes when needed, ...I keep it on my right hand side at all times.



Luci Hanson shares all these wonderful ideas for tools we bet you never even knew you had.

My favorite tool are those I come up with and can discard when its convenient.

A juice mix canister to hold my tools for travel -all get discarded before flying home

A plastic bread package tie - that I can use as a label on my power cords

A clean tuna can and makeup sponge - for cleaning my brushes after glueups

A baby juice bottle to hold sharp toothpicks - the lid is great for holding small items or glue

A plastic catchup container for holding small beads or spent X-acto blades

A milk carton lid with attached ring to hold my glue on my finger while doing glueups

A plastic room key to apply pressure on wallpaper to get smooth and squeeze out the paste

A strip of the room key cut to a point to get glue out of corners

A shortened old toothbrush to clean corners of glue and wallpaper paste squeeze-out



Susan Skinner shares this tool with Create.

I have lots of favorite tools but I use these tiny tipped bottles almost daily. A friend of mine and fellow miniaturist gave them to me. I have three of them each filled with a different one my favorite glues; wood, Ultimate, and clear tacky. They are great for precision glueing!

Here's a submission with a twist.

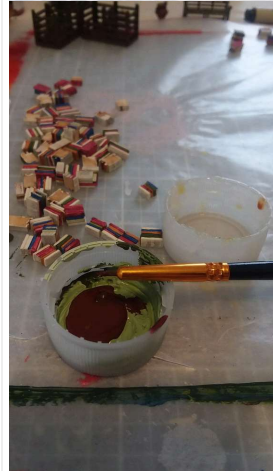
Maybe this doesn't really qualify as a tool but in order to use all of our tools we all need our fingers and hands!

Mae Karoli



Laura Sandison writes to us about these tools.

I am pretty new to minis, but have always made things. My first favorite is for building and holding. I love the 2" angle brace. 2 inches is perfect for 1/4" scale walls. It's also heavy enough to help with flattening any of those papers panels that might have a little warp to them. I helps to use a layer of wax paper between the article and the brace to prevent sticking in case it's damp.



The second is my favorite for painting and gluing. Although I always have a multi-cupped palette on my work table, I also have a basket full of plastic water bottle caps. I can use and re-use them for paint and glue. The sides where the threads are are great for removing too much paint from the paint brushes. The glue is easy to peel out and you can reuse them. When they get too gunky, just toss them!



Natalie Maguire shares her favorite tools with us.

I tend to be a tool freak and have many tools for my miniature work which I love depending on the project. I always use the three pictured. The tweezers and knife are my favorite and the T-pin works much better than a tooth pick. It has a finer point for applying glue to small places and can be easily cleaned off for repeated use and it doesn't break!



Pam McDonald writes,

Here is a description and photo of one of my favourite tools.

#### Midwest Products Hobby and Craft Ruler

Just to show that tools don't have to be expensive - one that is indispensable, especially when working in smaller scales, is the Hobby and Craft Ruler by Midwest. It has notches cut on the side ranging from 1/64" to 1/2", solving the problem of determining the thickness of tiny strips of wood. There are also holes for measuring dowels between 1/16" and 1/4".

Price varies: Midwest no longer stocks this item but it is still available from suppliers like Hobbyline (\$2.62)



Kim Hood shared this tip with us.

My favorite tool are these inexpensive emery boards, I get them at the dollar store. I like that I can trim them down easily with scissors to get into tiny spots.

Thank you for doing this I really enjoy seeing everyone's favorite tools and learning better ways to make minis.



From Gail Seus

This LEGO piece is the perfect jig for 1/4 scale or smaller scales. It is very portable and inexpensive. I have gotten mine at Disney Springs (FL) at the Lego Store and have also bought them online because I like to give them as little token gifts. If you have Lego sets at home, you might be able to locate this piece too. Tip: they melt in the microwave.



Carol Ply shared this tool for the tool challenge.

Wonderful for 1/4 to 1/2 foam core and gator board. Used by picture framers for cutting mat board.



Susan Watkins' favorite and most used tool is the Chopper 2. I think it gives me the most accurate miter cuts and straight cuts. It doesn't 'squish' the wood like a hand held miter cutter. It works well with many strip wood pieces, but it isn't designed to cut larger pieces.



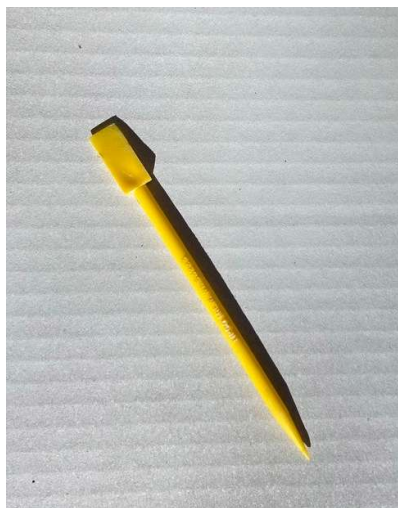
Eleanor Kilham shares her favorite tools with us.

The small, 6 inch metal ruler and a ball-tip tool are two of my favorite tools in combination. They are invaluable for scoring fold lines in paper minis! Every tool kit should have them!



Susan Richter says:

This may seem silly, but my favourite tool is my purple xacto knife. It's my favourite colour, and fits in my hand perfectly. It's always there to help me out of jam, and smooths the way.



Both Barbara Thornton Hill and Pearl V's favorite tool is the Syd tool.

Barbara says, "This is one of my well-used Syd Sticks. I love it and use it all the time in my minis. I have a bunch of them. I use the pointy end to apply glue and a clean one to clean out oozing glue. Also for opening up areas that got paint in them when I don't want paint in them. I use the big flat end to spread glue on bigger surfaces but yet is too small to use an old credit card on. It can mix paints, burnish down small parts such as the latches on Betterley suitcases, small pictures, etc. It is my go-to tool when I don't know what else to use and it cleans up beautifully. I've worn several out over the years. There are several dealers who carry them but your need to ask."



This submission is from Cat Wingler

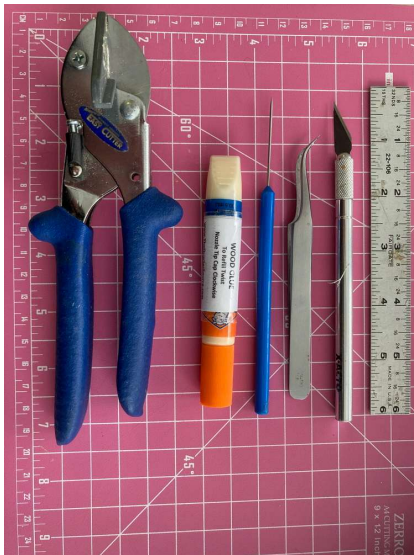
Asking a tool junkie to pick their favorite tool is like asking a Mom to pick their favorite child. You can't pick just one! However, asking which tool I use the most is easy. I use my tweezers while working on everything except painting. Hmm, may even to hold something while painting, lol.



Jessica Cottrell shares:

My favorite tool is this little glue bottle that I filled with tacky glue. I also have others that I have filled with other types of glue. I love how easy it is to apply glue with this - sometimes it's a little tricky to apply glue using a toothpick and I found this to be the perfect solution!

Thank you so much for all that you do!



These are some of Terry Unnolds can't live withouts:

No way could I have a single favorite. I'm currently working on some small scale minis and couldn't do without any of these tools: my smallest miter cutter (a travel version for straight or perfectly angled cuts,) tweezers angled to maneuver in tiny spaces, a xacto knife, a dissecting tool (handy for putting on tiny bits of glue or removing excess, wood glue in a small applicator that's easy to refill and a cork backed 6" metal ruler.



Judy Jazdyk shares with us how she uses one of her Cricut tools.

One of my favorite tools is a repurposed Cricut cutting machine tool. It's a mini spatula, scraper and picker up tool. I especially like it to pry apart 2 pieces of wood that I've incorrectly glued together. The tool is thin enough, usually, to slip the metal spatula between the 2 pieces of wood and gently pry apart.



Cheryl Kruse shares that her favorite tool is her Microlux Variable Speed Saw. It's at least 6 years old and I love it for cutting wood or plastic, straight cuts or as a scroll saw.

Shirley Foisy shared this with us: ( Toothpicks seem to be in the lead)

I don't think a pic is necessary.

My favorite tool is the standard round toothpick. They have so many uses:

apply glue in small amounts or small areas

move small parts

dampened, they pick up flower parts and release readily where you apply them to glued floral stem

curl papers for plants or other items

can be painted and used as floral stems

use as a super tiny paintbrush (I actually made a painting about 2" x 1 1/2" with a toothpick) or just spot painting

stir small amounts of paint or when blending two colors on plastic wrap covered work surface or paint palette

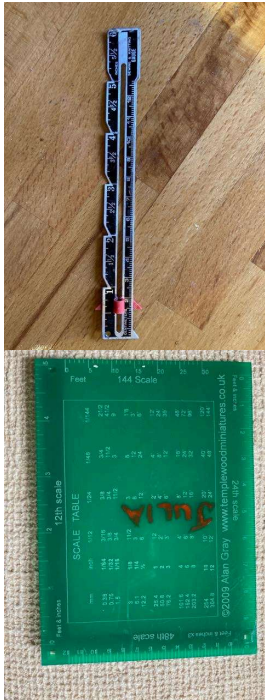
can be used as table legs - the fancy end type or plain round toothpicks

paint tip for candles

use as handles of many types

paint gold to make stair runner anchor  
use as tool to detail Fimo items  
scrape excess glue off when it oozes out between two pieces you are glueing together  
cleaning small nooks and crannies of dirt or other debris  
use as wood trim

I probably left out some of the things I have used toothpicks for but this is a good list to give an idea of the versatility of the humble toothpick.



Julia Greenhalf from England shares these favorite tools with us:

This might be a bit unusual for “Tool of the Month” but I can’t live without my Quilt Gauge. I use it when I’m making tables, to check both sides to make sure it’s level, same when I put ceilings in. I use this to draw the marks and then the height when I’m actually installing it. Find it as useful, if not more useful, than a levelling gauge (those ones with the bubbles in it but this time in the morning, can’t think what it’s called!).

Just for interest, the other item in my tool box or hand bag when I go to shows, and can’t live without, is Templewood’s Scale Table. It comes in Imperial and Metric but Imperial works for us. Just helps gauging the size of things and slips in your pocket rather than carrying a furniture item or doll to use for measuring.

Thanks for all you and the team are doing to keep us motivated and linked up.



From Marilyn Nielsen we get this favorite tool.

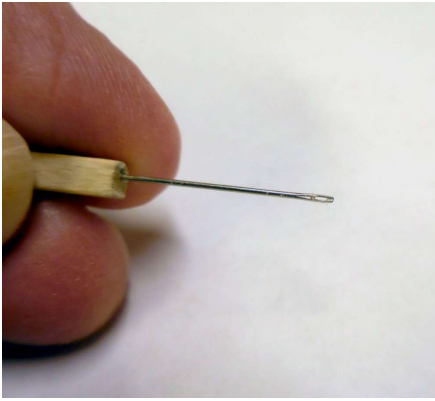
My favorite tool goes back at least 20 years as a tip from a fellow miniaturist. It is a dental tool used to stimulate your gums. I have mounted it on a dowel, although they also come with a curved metal handle which isn't as convenient to use.

I love it because it will get glue out of the smallest corners. And, when dipped in paint, will give you the TINIEST dots possible, as illustrated.



Here is a favorite tool from Diane Fisher:

This tool is Mitre Master. I bought it years ago from Micromark. It is used to chop the thinner wood we use in minis. There are marks on it to indicate angles, such as 45 degrees and 90 degrees. It is accurate and is a time saver.



Tori West shares this tool with us that I just know the Paperclay people out there will enjoy.

This is my favorite tool, and it is one I made. It is literally just a sewing needle with the top of the eye rounded a bit, then stuck deeply into a short piece of balsa wood. I use it as a very tiny sculptor's "ribbon tool" when working on tiny Creative Paperclay® sculptures. I have also used it with polymer clay, but I rarely work with that.

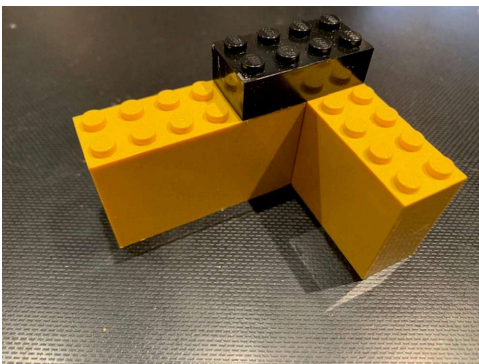


A wonderful tip from Pat Hamilton:

I love this mini rotary tool purchased at Harbor Freight Tools for just \$10. I use it EVERY DAY. The little drill bits are easily changed out so I can drill with it one minute or use the sanding wheel the next. I keep an extra rotary tool at all time because mine only last about a year because of constant use. But for \$10 (sometimes even less on sale) it's a BARGAIN to me. I also purchased the precision drill bit set with all sorts of different mini-sized bits for about \$8. I've never seen bits this tiny but they're perfect for mini work.



I sometimes use the tiny drill bits just with my fingers, without the rotary tool. They work great. I would suggest if you're buying the Harbor Freight rotary tool and precision drill bits that you buy an EXTRA set of drill bits. Those super tiny ones break easily.



From Lynne Hoffman:

An oldie, but still goodie: Legos. They make a quick right angle for a makeshift glue jig. They're lightweight and compact for a travel toolkit.



Another tool tip from Beth Grabau. I have not heard this one before, and can't wait to try it.

Since I had so many cans of stain and the stain markers can be pricey (and I can't seem to refill them correctly), I started to use loose tea infusers to stain small wood pieces. I put the pieces in the tea infuser, dunk it in the stain, pull it up, tap to remove excess stain, and then dump the contents onto a paper towel. If a piece is too big to fit in the infuser, I dunk using tweezers. I like the stain coverage better than the markers, which I try to reserve for when away from home or when touching up (or being lazy). After the tea infuser is empty, I just rinse with water to remove any excess remaining stain so it will be ready in the future. I sometimes have to dab the wood pieces with a paper towel to remove excess stain, but it really works great!



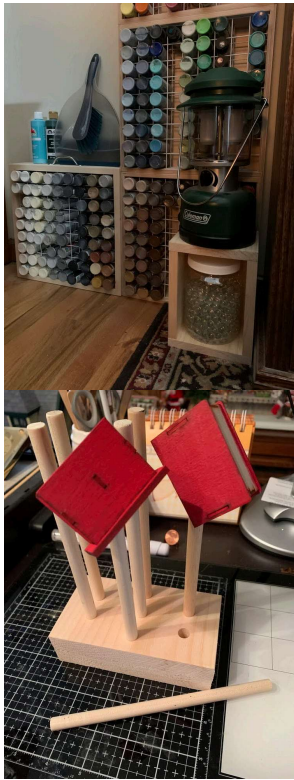
The thing about this challenge that I find most often is that people are having trouble with narrowing it down to their "favorite" tool. There are just too many to choose from. With that in mind, we share this, from Susie Aguilar.

I have many tools that I just have to have, like small, pointed scissors and tweezers, and a sharp craft knife. But my favorite discovery is simply a tongue depressor (or popsicle stick) with double-sided foam tape attached. This inexpensive tool allows me to stick down the smallest of items and paint them without dropping. I can not remember who shared this idea with me but I am forever grateful.



This tip came from Sue Ann Ketchum. I personally can't wait to check this one out.

My favorite tool is a wallpaper knife. It takes single-edged razor blades and is easy to grip for those who have arthritis issues. I have trouble gripping an xacto knife. It is good for chopping small pieces of wood, clay, paper, cardstock, etc.



Barbara Antol shared these two wonderful tips:

#### Paint Marbles:

I learned this neat little tip awhile ago and find it very useful. Adding a marble to bottles of acrylic paint really helps to mix the paint well when you shake the bottle. You can use colored marbles if you have them, but I had bought a bulk bag of clear 1/2" marbles used for filling vases. I store them in a jar near my paint supply. The 1/2" marbles fit easily in most acrylic paint bottles (DecoArt, FolkArt). Just drop in a marble and shake to mix the paint well. My husband even built me a neat little wood caddy to hold my marble jar near my paints!

#### Small objects paint rack:

This is another little item my husband built for me using some scrap wood and dowels. I find it so useful especially when working on book box kits (like ones from Betterleys or AlphaStamps). I'm able to paint the entire book and mount the pieces on the dowels to dry. The dowels are removable to allow for drying multiple kits at a time or larger book box kits.



Carolyn Peck said we could share her submission verbatim.

My favorite tool is my Tack Hammer from Brookstone that my father gave to me back in 1980. We were sharing the hobby and he told me it worked well for tacking in brass brads for copper wiring and for nailing a house together. He was right!

Of course, I am fond of sanding blocks, tweezers, Cir-Kit hole punch, legos, hubby's radial arm saw, my carpenter's square, my speed square and a good metal ruler and self healing cutting mats. And freezer paper!

And Xacto knives.

And my Drexel tool.

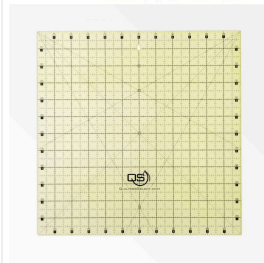
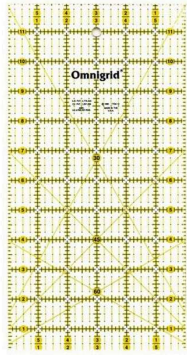
Oh, and good artist paint brushes!

And a Sweet Tea Vodka



Nina Peerry's favorite tool is

"Syd's tool". She uses it to apply glue, paint the tiniest things, use it as a pick or pry bar on minis, poke holes. It does so many things!



Bonnie Helterhoff shares this great tip with us:

My favorite tool (tools) are quilt rulers. I do a little quilting in addition to miniatures and realized if I used my quilt rulers they were 1. easier to hold in place as they are larger than a ruler 2. require no measuring three places; drawing a line and hoping it's straight 3 guarantee that your corners will be right angles. They are a little pricey but JoAnn and Hobby Lobby have coupons you can use and they come in a variety of size so you can match the size to what you most work on. I use larger ones for things like wallpaper and cutting pieces for large furniture pieces; I use a small 4" square one for quarter scale and small items. I simply could not function without them!! For example, if I wanted to cut wallpaper I would place one end of the ruler along the end of the paper I will not cut. Place the measurement I want (say 8") along the bottom of the paper and cut along the opposite edge. Done. Super simple and super accurate.



Jackie Browder says, "I know it sounds rather simple, but my favorite tool is a wooden toothpick. I got a big box for about \$3. I use them for everything! I add a dot of paint, apply glue, poke things into position, and sometimes make them into dollhouse items! No cleaning needed. Just throw it away and get a fresh one for each task".



Mary Johnson of Yakima, WA, shares that her favorite tools are toothpicks and razor blades. Besides the usual gluing things together, she loves the control of using toothpicks for painting tiny detail on her miniatures. "I can control fine lines and dots better than with paintbrushes (especially when painting eyes on my little dolls) by sharpening toothpicks to various sized points with razor blades. Also toothpicks are round and square, so they become useful "posts" or trim details for some of my projects. They are inexpensive, and readily available so tossing them when used up is no problem for me."



Ruth Goodger shares with us that her favorite tools are a sharp pointed, curved tweezer and The Chopper. She likes the Chopper for tiny stuff that sometimes gets lost in her table saw.

This one is a video (well worth seeing!) instead of a picture. Click here: <https://vimeo.com/511179854/fb7e9e78f8>

Janet Roller's favorite tool right now is her heat gun. She uses it with puffy paint to create brick and stone work on miniature houses and booknooks.



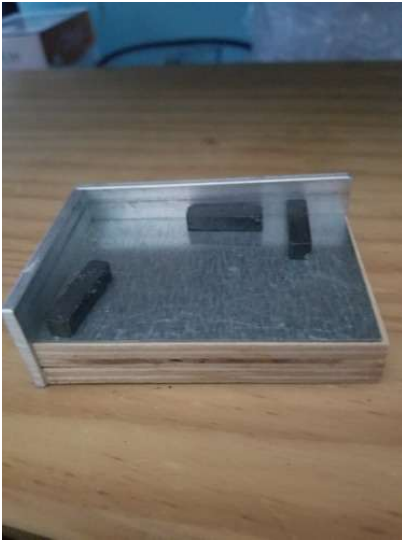
Jeff Wilson's favorite tool is a scalpel with a #11 surgical blade. A scalpel handle secures the blade so it will not twist or slide out. Surgical blades are extremely sharp but have the added advantage of only costing around \$0.12 each when bought by a box of 100. While there are other blade shapes I find the small end of the #11 is ideal for miniature work. If you are worried about changing blades Amazon also sells disposable scalpels for around a dollar each.



From Rita Crawford: My favorite tool is my sharp pointed curved tweezer. To me they have always felt like an extension of my fingers.



Anne Richards shared this tip with us: There is an update to an old favorite: The X-acto blade. What you want to look for now is the X-acto Z series #11 GOLD BLADE Super sharp. Zirconium Nitride coated blade. Put this blade in a dedicated holder and store in a wooden pencil box or container. Enjoy using for your most fussy and delicate work.



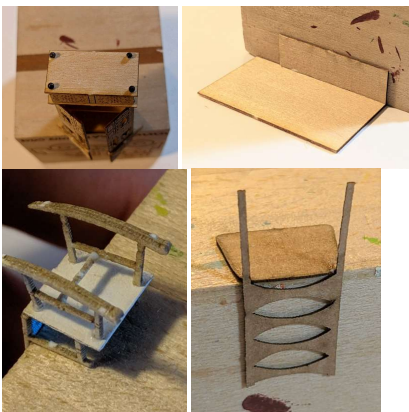
Sandi Shalometh, from Region N-1, shared these kind words as well as this tool tip:

What a fun idea to keep our spirits up in the absence of live events-sharing tools. Just started viewing the create site. This is great.

My favorite tool is my gluing jig! This one is perfect for my ¼ in. projects



Cindy Bottasso shared this tip with us: My favorite tool is the fine pointed tweezers. I got it from Amazon \$7 for 8 of them. It picks up everything that I can't. I use to hold things while I paint, to bend wire in small loops, and to get in small spaces.

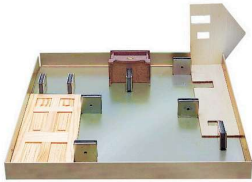


Dia Crissey-Baum shares this great tip:

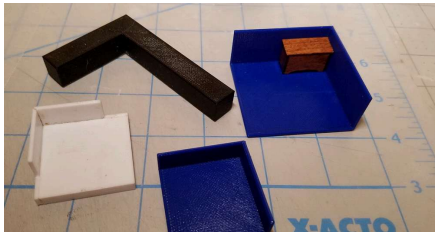
My favorite tool is so simple, but I don't know what I'd do without it!

It's a block. Just a 2" wooden block. It's got straight edges and 90 degree corners. You can use it to make edges straight, or glue seats to tiny chair backs, or hold something with a fancy top upside down to glue its feet on (which you should have done before putting on the fancy top but forgot that step).

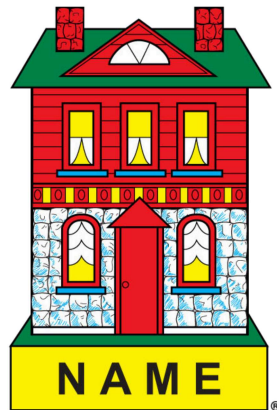
I was given my first block as a child and didn't use it for miniatures. But I got my first block for making miniatures at my first National in Charleston, in the class I took on antiquing finishes.



Susan Gillespie shares: My favorite tool is my magnetic tool jig! Great for keeping projects square! (Not my picture).



Christiane Starks writes, "My favorite tools are the jigs my son Michael designed & printed for our club members, the Albuquerque Mini Makers. Michael observed a few of us working on our smaller scale minis and designed these tools to make our building go more smoothly. The plastic he chose for these tools allows me to



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Beth Grabau shared this tip with us: I will throw my idea out there. It is simple, blue tack or museum putty on a cap (both shown). I have used it in all scales although only 1/48 in this photo. It is great for holding something while painting, I use it a lot with metal miniatures. I also used it to hold the mannequin while applying the tiny neckline beads, or the gold glitter on the scale. I have various sizes of twist off caps from drink bottles. Sides of the caps are tall enough to be held easily. Since the cap is round it can be easily rotated in your fingers while working. Love love it! Learned this from a club member that passed many years ago.



Kathy Moore submitted this tip: The tool I love and use the most is an exquisite pair of German sewing scissors. While they look old, they're actually brand new and I use them for cutting cloth. I bought them new at a quilting store in Tillamook Oregon and have used them for years, cutting out tiny boxes, upholstering tiny chairs, dressing tiny dolls I have made. They have outlasted dozens of other craft scissors. Enjoy!