Information Sheet

Candle Making:

There are 2 main ways to make candles, using latex, silicone rubber or glass moulds from suppliers such as Thornes or the traditional dipping method. One advantage of moulds is that you will only need a limited amounts of wax. Dipping involves larger quantities. In all cases the beeswax must be very clean. When dirt meets the flame, it will cause it to splutter. (NB. I am assuming that beeswax is being used. Paraffin wax may need different sized wicks)

Using Moulds:

Latex moulds are easiest to use, except probably the more complicated shapes. The mould must be supported up-side-down, the smaller ones in jam jars, the longer in a thin vase or a purpose make wooden stand. First insert the wick and seal around the hole if it is at all loose. Take advice on the size of the wick when buying the mould. I find that a 1" wick suit most candles. To keep the wick straight, tie it to a cocktail stick and lay it across the base, pull the other end to take up the slack. You must allow the wax to fully harden before removing the mould (this can be hastened in the freezer). Take care to peel the mould off slowly, supporting the top end.

Silicone Rubber provides the best detail, although they are quite expensive. They are usually split into 2 halves making opening them easy and resulting in very good candles with no joins showing. Thornes and Mann Lake both sell an amazing variety, although the latter has its name stamp on the bottom which could spoil the beauty of the finished candle. Check out their catalogues and follow the instructions. One disadvantage is the thickness of the mould tends to insulate the wax, delaying its cooling time.

Glass moulds for straight, plain candles, they can be tricky to use, as the candle may get stuck and be difficult to remove cleanly. Thornes give the following instructions:

1. To help the candles release from the mould, rinse in soapy water and shake off the drops, otherwise try silicone spray.
2. Dip the correct size wick into molten wax until all air bubbles have come out. Warm the mould gently with a fan heater (or hair drier).
3. Arrange the mould so that it is held vertically with the wick supported a few centimetres above the mould. Seal the wick where it exits the mould with plasticine or wax glue.
4. Pour the wax at about 75 degrees C. The hollow formed in the base as the wax cools and shrinks, can be filled with fresh wax.
5. When the candle is cold, remove it from the mould. A sharp tap with the hand may help it, or a spell in the freezer may encourage stubborn ones.

Dipped Candles: (This is **my** method, as most dippers will create their own methods with experience)

A candle ¾" diameter at the bottom x 11" long weighs on average 2ozs. This will give a guide as to how much wax you will need for any given number of candles, allowing a further 12 to 16ozs to fill the dipping tube. (16 candles will need 32 + 16ozs = 3lbs (1.4kg) at least. Good clean beeswax is then broken up ready for melting. It takes me a whole morning to prepare and make 2 X 16 candles = 32.

1. **Preparation:** gather everything that you will need:
   a. Beeswax, broken up in smallish pieces.
   b. 1" wick + lead weights (code '4' lead sheet off-cuts are ideal, see picture) Fishing weights might be OK for this. This is to keep the wicks straight for the first few dips, after which you will cut them off.
   c. Lengths of dowel or other thin bits of wood. Each length will hold 4 wicks and should be about 15" long.
   d. Pliers to pinch on the lead.
   e. Foil to cover the hob and newspaper to cover the adjacent worktops and floor.

f. 2 old saucepans and 2 x 2lb jam jars to melt the wax in.
g. A 5ltr wood preservative metal can with its top removed.
h. A laboratory measuring cylinder approximately 2" diameter x 14" long. Plastic are best as they have a flanged base attached which you will need to wrap with lead sheet to hold it down and vertical.
i. Kitchen scissors.
j. Cooking thermometer.

2. **Start melting the wax:**
   a. Put the jam jars, filled with bits of wax, in the water filled saucepans and heat them.
   b. Put the 5ltr tin with the lab measuring cylinder on the hob and fill it with hot water and heat it. Add bits of wax to the cylinder.
   c. While the wax is melting prepare the wicks. Decide how long you want the candles to be and cut the wicks to that length + enough to tie around the dowel. Tie them and pinch on the lead weights. 4 wicks to each dowel. It is best to dip 12 or 16 wicks (3 or 4 dowels) at each session.

Wicks being weighted and tied to battens

Hob protected with foil and wax being melted

3. **Start dipping:**
   a. Keep topping up the jam jars as these are your reservoir for topping up the dipping cylinder.
   b. Once the wax in the dipping cylinder is completely melted, start dipping methodically. Rest the dowels across the corner of the worktops or create your own safe place. Top up the cylinder as necessary.
   c. The first dip into molten wax, wait until all air bubbles have come out, to saturate the wick.
   d. After 3 dips cut off the lead weights. (put aside to re-use for another time)

Wicks after their first dip

Wicks after the lead has been cut off

   e. The water around the dipping cylinder should be kept at about 75-80 degrees C, too low and the wax will become lumpy, too high and inadequate wax will stay on the candle.
   f. Check that the wicks are straight.
   g. Continue dipping until the candles are the required thickness. It will take approximately 18 dips for ¾". Half way through, you may cut off the drippy bottom of the candle.

h. For a really smooth finish, the candles may be rolled on a very flat surface such as glass or a highly finished stone worktop. This should be done when the candles are warmish.
i. If you are to enter your finished candles in a show, you should cut the bottom of the candle off square to expose the wick, which should be central.

j.

Finished candles ready to cool

Dipping wax in 5ltr water jacket

Finished candles with waxed wicks ends

Spare clean wax, in blocks, for future use

All beeswax candles make very good presents or can be sold. To prepare them for this, create pairs of the same length and wrap them in tissue paper with a encircling band such as:

Hand dipped beeswax candles

by

the Beekeeper

Like all crafts, practice makes perfect