



Clay Creature Sculptures

Best for: grades 4-6

Description: create an imaginative clay creature that combines unique features of many animals.

Vocabulary: features, texture, spherical, score

Required materials

- air-dry clay
- bowl for water
- paper towels
- plastic knife
- toothpicks
- wax paper
- sponge

Optional materials

- chenille stems
- googly eyes
- clay tools
- small found objects (seashells, popsicle, sticks, buttons, etc.)

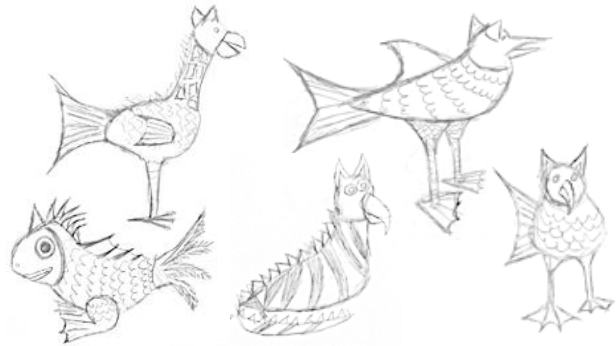


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Instructions

1. Make a list of animal **features** (ex: fish's eye, cat's ears, lizard's tail, etc.). List as many as you can.

Helpful hint: list **features** by specific categories (ex: body, head, legs, eyes, etc.) and fill each section with as many animal **features** as possible to choose from.



2. Taking inspiration from your list, sketch creatures with combinations of 3-4 different **features**. Select a final design.

Helpful hint: explore a full range of possibilities before selecting a final combination.

3. After selecting the final design, add surface **texture** details to the sketch (ex: scales, fur, feathers). Draw several sketches of final design.

Note: let drawing be inspiration for the sculpture, not an exact model. Be open to further experimentation while sculpting later.

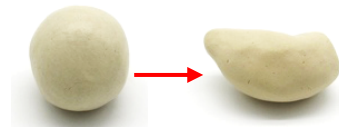


4. Prepare the working space: place a sheet of wax paper down so clay will not stick to table.



5. Fill cup of water halfway and place sponge inside cup.

6. Using two hands, roll a tennis ball size amount of air-dry clay into a **sphere**, or rounded ball-like shape. Make 2 or 3 of these.



7. With your fingers, pinch, pull, and form one clay **sphere** into a shape for the creature's body. Use tools or plastic knife to trim shape or size as needed. Save extra clay for later use.



8. Take one of the other **spheres** and split into 4-6 smaller pieces. Form each smaller piece into rest of creature's body parts (ex: head, legs, tail) by rolling clay into coils, flattening and cutting into shapes, or rolling into a ball. Use extra clay as needed.

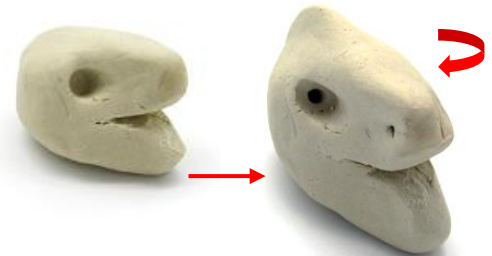
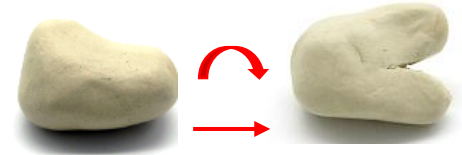


Note: experiment with found materials. Substitute clay parts for other materials wherever desired (ex: toothpicks for legs).

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9. To form a basic **head** shape:

- Roll small amount of clay into ball with two hands and form into shape.
- Cut slot for mouth. Remove excess clay.
- Push dents into clay for eyes using a finger, pen or pencil.
- Poke smaller hole with toothpick into eyes for pupils. Use toothpick for nose holes if desired.



10. Attach all created parts to the creature body. To attach **clay to clay**:

- Scratch with toothpick into surfaces that will be connected (this is called **scoring**).
- Apply a small amount of water to the **scored** areas. Re-**score** areas if marks fade.
- Gently push the two **scored** pieces into each other.
- Smooth connection with sponge or finger. Strengthen the connection by adding clay around it as needed.



11. Attach **clay with toothpicks**:

- Push toothpick into clay. Cut to a desired length if needed.
- Push clay part into opposite end of toothpick.
- Gently push pieces into each other and let dry 24 hours to best seal the connection.



Note: leave toothpicks bare or wrap clay around them for extra support and detail.



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Note: if sculpture is unstable, widen distance between legs or add more clay to weigh down the base. If needed, remove some clay from body to lighten.

Note: for best stability, have 3-4 standing points (ex: two legs and a tail or 4 legs).



12. Carve in **texture** and add other details.

- **Clay tools:** use clay tools to carve and stamp details.
- **Stamping:** press found objects into the clay to make repetitive markings (ex: fish scales, fur) or leave them attached to clay (ex: add two shells for elephant ears).
- **Toothpicks:** use toothpicks to draw patterns (ex: zebra stripes).
- **Chenille stems:** cut, coil, and add chenille sticks to clay for details (ex: hair, fur, curly tail, etc.).

Note: to smooth cracks in clay or erase a **texture**, dip sponge in water, squeeze all water out, and smooth over cracks or **textures** with sponge.



Extensions

For extra challenge:

1. Make a list of categories of **features** (ex: legs, nose, etc.). List 6 specific **features** under each category and number each. Roll a dice 6 times and choose the corresponding **features** for each roll as the inspiration for the next sculpture!
2. Paint color onto sculpture, after it dries fully, with acrylics.



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For a creative spin:

1. Add googly eyes into clay for eye effects. Once on, push clay around edges of eyes to seal connection.
2. Cut toothpicks and push into clay for small details (ex: porcupine spikes, teeth, horns).
3. Add movement with chenille stems. Wrap stem around a pencil, then slide pencil out to create curls and springs. Try connecting pieces this way. Use 2 or more for extra strength and support.



Web Resources

[Video: #MetKids how-to make a clay pot](#)

[Explore the American Museum of Ceramic Art's online collection](#)

[Video: clay hand-building techniques](#)

[Ceramic postcards at the Clay Art Center](#)

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Questions about or ideas for our programs? Email edu@daytonart.org