

welcome to your clay date

*by
clay stories pottery studio*



what is clay?

Clay is earth - it is made up of the finest mineral particles created when rock is slowly broken down over millions of years by weather, water, and time. Because the particles are so tiny, they trap water between them, which makes clay soft, plastic, and responsive to touch. This is why clay can be squeezed, stretched, and shaped more easily than sand or ordinary dirt.

When clay is dried, it becomes firm and brittle. But when fired in a kiln, the mineral particles undergo a transformation: they fuse together and turn into hard and durable ceramic. This magical change is what makes pottery both useful and long-lasting. Archaeologists still find clay vessels thousands of years old, their forms and decorations carrying stories of past cultures.

pinch pot

Pinching is one of the simplest ways of making a vessel. The pinch pot is used in traditional ceramics across the world — from Japanese tea bowls to African water vessels. Each one carries the fingerprint of its maker, now it's time to make yours!

Materials and tools:

Clay, approx. 250g

Your hands!

optional small
tools for decoration





1. Take some clay in the palm of your hand. To work out how much is manageable for you, cup your other hand over the top of the ball.

You should be able to cover the clay completely with your top hand. This will make sure the piece is manageable as it grows with your pinching.

2. Pat the clay into a ball and hold it in your non-dominant hand. With your dominant hand make a hole with your thumb in the middle of the ball but don't poke all the way through!

Have your clay ball sit on your thumb like a little mushroom and leave about 1cm of clay at the top. Now return it to your palm.





3. Slowly pinch the clay evenly, starting at the bottom of the pot and moving slowly around and up, towards the rim. After each pinch, rotate the pot ready for the next pinch.

Remember to cup the pot with your non-dominant hand, supporting the shape as it grows.

4. Continue pinching the pot, once you have pinched around twice and reached the top of the rim, slowly run your fingers around the pot, feeling for areas that are thicker.

Pinch these so that the whole pot is of an even thickness, making sure not to go thinner than 3mm. Remember that clay will shrink by approximately 10% during the firing process.

5. If you would like your rim to be a little more solid you can gently run a finger around it to compress it, smoothening the edge at the same time.



6. If you would like your cup to have a flat bottom, gently tap the pot on a flat surface, supporting it with both your hands.



making a footing

1. If you would like to add a footing, take a little bit of clay and roll a small coil. Turn the cup upside down, being gentle with the cup at this stage, careful not to squish it or damage the rim.



2. Using the scoring tool, scratch the base of the cup where the coil will be placed.



3. Roll the coil into a doughnut ring shape, join the ends together with a tiny dot of slip (liquid clay "glue"). Score the ring.

4. Place some slip on the ring and on the scored base of the cup.

5. Place the footing on the cup and gently smudge the clay between the ring and the cup.



decorating & adding texture

Now you can decorate your cup, for example by using different tools to create texture. Try pressing different wooden tools on the clay to achieve different patterns. Be creative!



slab plate

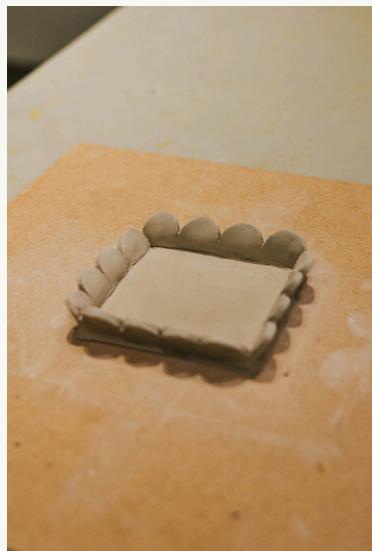
Slab building is one of the most versatile and grounding ceramic techniques. From ancient serving platters to contemporary minimalist tableware, rolled flat and shaped by hand, each plate carries subtle marks of the maker - now it's time to create your own.

Materials and tools:

Clay, approx. 250g

Your hands!
rolling pin
wooden guide sticks
a needle / knife

optional small
tools for decoration





1. Flatten your ball of clay on the wooden board. Remember to leave some clay if you plan to add a rim or any other elements to your place.

2. Roll a flat slab of clay using the rolling pin. Use wooden guide sticks to achieve even thickness.

If the clay is sticking to the board - roll it inbetween two layers of cloth.





3. Using a needle tool or a knife cut the shape of your plate. You can do it freehand to achieve more organic shape, or a wooden stick to cut straight lines.

Get rid of the excess clay and smoothen the edge with your finger if you're not planning to add a rim.

You can also raise the edge with your fingers, pressing the plate edge gently from the bottom.



adding a rim

4. If you would like to add a raised rim, roll a stripe of clay - the same length as the edge of your plate.

You can leave it straight or cut any shape that you want. Smoothen the top edge with your finger.



5.Before attaching the rim to the plate, scratch the edge of the plate with a scoring tool.

Do the same on the side of the rim that will be attached to the plate.



6.Add slip (clay “glue”) on the scored parts of your plate’s base.

It will help the rim stick to the plate!



7. Place the rim on the plate and press it firmly to the base of the plate.

Smooth the edges with your fingers. For a finishing touch, smooth the piece with a slightly wet to almost dry sponge.



coil pot

Coil pots are made by layering and joining hand-rolled ropes of clay on top of each other, slowly building up a wall. You can choose to either blend the coils together or leave them visible on the surface of the pot.

Materials and tools:

Clay, approx. 250g
Your hands!
Scoring tool and rib
Slip

Optional small tools
for decoration.





1. Take a golf-ball size of clay, and roll or squash a flat base.

It needs to be wide enough for the base of your piece, and around 8mm thick. You can cut a specific shape out with your pin tool or go for a more organic base by using your hands.

2. Roll your first coil. Take another handful of clay and roll it roughly between your hands to create a sausage shape. Place it on the table and using your whole hand from the base of your palm all the way to your fingertips, roll it along the work surface. If the coil starts to misshape, use your fingers to manipulate and re-adjust the coil before rolling again.





3. Using the scoring tool, score the top of the base around the edge where the wall will go. Don't go too deep that you cut through the clay. Next, apply a thin layer of slip (liquid clay "glue") to the area where you have just scored.

4. Place the coil around the edge of the base, pinching off any excess and pressing it down firmly. At this early stage it helps to think about what width you want your mug to have, and consciously place your coils so that the piece remains stable and robust.

5. Blend the inside join. You can use the back of a wooden knife tool or with your thumb. Experiment with different tools to see what suits you best.



6. Make more coils and add to the pot row by row. You can either make a really long coil and wind it all the way up, or you can go layer by layer. Pinch each coil onto the top of the previous coil to join them. As your pot grows, you need to be aware of its form - if you want the pot to flare outwards or inwards, you need to stagger the coils to adjust the shape.



smoothening

If you want a smooth surface, you can blend each coil together. To do this support the inside of your pot with your opposing hand as you are working on the outside, and vice versa. If you decide to smooth your whole pot, you must ensure that you can fit your hand into the opening at the top. If you have a narrow opening, smooth the coils at the base of the pot while it is still wide enough to support. As the form narrows you can use a wooden tool as an internal support as you smooth the outside.



1. First, using your thumb or a wooden tool, either roughly pinch the layers down or drag the clay up from the coil below.
2. Using a spiky metal kidney, drag the spikes all over the pot. This will feel counter-intuitive, but will help in achieving an even surface at the end. Make sure to support the piece from the inside.



3. Using a smooth metal kidney, smooth all of the marks made by the serrated metal kidney. If the clay is too hard at this stage, add a tiny pit of water to soften it a little bit. To refine it even more use a lightly dampened sponge to smooth out any remaining marks.



tips

- If you find your coils are uneven and are getting too thin or thick, you need to move your hands along the clay as you roll, rather than applying too much pressure on one spot.
- Use two hands for larger coils and start in the middle, moving your hands away from each other as you roll. This will make the coil grow.
- If your coils get too dry as you are rolling them, spray the work surface with water. This will allow the coil to absorb some of the water without getting too wet - otherwise you can end up with a slippery coil.
- If you choose to leave your coils unblended make sure you check for gaps and if needed tightly press them together.

decorating and adding texture

If you'd like, you can add texture to your pot:
use different tools, experiment, be creative!



tools



- 1 smooth metal kidney
- 2 spiky metal kidney
- 3 needle
- 4 scoring tool
- 5 sponge
- 6,7,8,9 additional tools for creating texture

