



Make Clay From Dirt

This activity teaches learners to make their own clay from dirt and water. In depth steps include gathering dirt, filtering debris, extracting clay from a liquid mixture, then finally kneading and sculpting homemade clay! This activity promotes resourceful creative thinking and encourages environmental awareness.

Please send students' final product to ppe@casulapowerhouse.com or tag #CPACCREATIVES on social media.



Ingredients:

- Dirt
- Water

Tools and Equipment:

- Shovel
- 2 buckets or containers
- An old T-shirt or metal strainer
- An old bath towel
- Clamps or bull dog clips
- Disposable gloves
- Wooden spoon

Method:

1. Gather your dirt! As clay is sedimentary, it's best to gather dirt that is close to a river or try digging for some dirt that contains clay in your backyard. The best dirt to collect sticks together when you squeeze it in your hands. The dirt may be full of sand, rocks, grass and twigs. The next few steps of our clay making process will help us remove these debris and extract the clay from the dirt.

2. Add water to your bucket of dirt. Stir the water and dirt mixture with a wooden spoon to break up all the particles. Try to achieve the consistency of a creamy soup.

3. These next steps will aim to separate the organics and get rid of the debris we don't need, including rocks, twigs and grass:

a) Vigorously stir the mixture again and let it settle for 10 seconds, allowing the heavy debris such as rocks and twigs to settle at the bottom of the bucket.

b) Carefully pour the liquid from the first bucket to the second. The rocks, twigs and sand will stay in the bottom of the first bucket, these can be disposed of into your garden.

c) Now you are left with a bucket filled with a mixture of water and filtered dirt. However, we now need to clean the mixture more thoroughly to remove the smaller organics such as sand that is also in the dirt.

d) Transfer the mixture into a bucket using either a metal strainer or an old t-shirt to help strain the mixture further. Before you start straining the mixture into a new bucket be sure to stir the mixture once again with a wooden spoon. The strainer/shirt will catch smaller debris such as tiny rocks and sand. You can empty these debris into your garden.

e) Thoroughly rinse your strainer and repeat the previous step again so you can catch any remaining debris. To help remove any sand left in the bucket you can gently pour the mixture from one bucket to another multiple times, ensuring that you rinse the remaining sand in each bucket between each pour.



4. You will now be left with a bucket of mixture which mostly consists of water and clay. Leave this to sit in the bucket undisturbed for at least 3 hours.

5. When the water and clay have mostly separated, gently scoop out the clear water with a spoon or ladle, or by pouring the water out of the bucket.

6. Fold the towel in half and place over a bucket holding the towel in place with clamps or bull clips on the rim of the bucket. It is important that the towel is doubled to ensure that the fibers of the towel catch most of the clay, and allows the excess water to seep through, acting like a filter. Ensure the towel does not touch the bottom of the bucket, because the excess water from the clay needs space to drip down to the bottom of the bucket.

7. Carefully pour your mixture into the towel and let it sit, allowing the mixture to dry out and for the water to drip through the towel into the bucket. To speed up this process place the bucket outside or near a window.
8. After a couple of hours most of the water will have evaporated and has been filtered through the towel. Remove the towel from the bucket and lay it flat on a bench.
9. Use a spoon to scrape the clay from the towel and place it on a flat surface. Some of the clay may be dry and some may still be quite wet.
10. Knead the clay to mix the dry and wet parts of the clay together.
11. If the clay is still too wet, flatten it out and let it sit for a little longer. If you find your clay is too dry, use a spray bottle of water to moisten it.
12. Once you've achieved the texture you're after, you've done it! You've made your own clay!