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Institut culturel Avataq
Avataq Cultural Institute

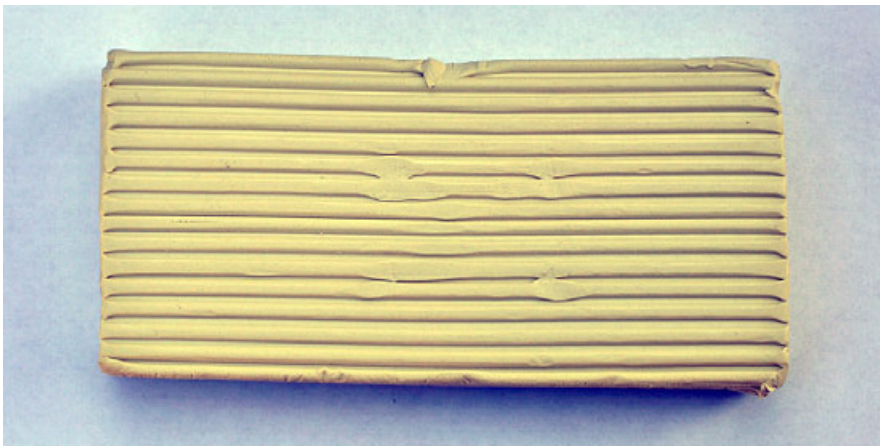
Visual Arts - Elementary

Steps

- Tools and Materials for Modeling

Modeling Clay (Playdough) / For younger students

Any modeling clay (playdough) will do. Make sure you have enough of it so each student has a good quantity to work with.



Non-Firing Clay (Self-Hardening Clay)

Again, make sure you have enough clay so each student has a sufficient quantity.

The color of the clay does not really matter. **Prepare some plastic bags to store the students' work between the art periods to keep them from drying. To do so, cover the clay pieces with wet brown paper or damp cloths and place them inside some hermetic plastic bags. However, if you wet the clay too much, it might turn into a mud impossible to sculpt, so be vigilant with the use of water!**



Tools for Clay

You can find several tools which could help in the creation of fine and precise forms. Tool sets can be bought at any good art material supplier.

Boxwood modeling tools, double wire end tools, brushes, fishing thread, nails...



Double wire end tools and other tools



Boxwood modeling tools set



Nails

Watercolours Discs

Watercolours along with a few paintbrushes of different sizes will give excellent results on dry clay.

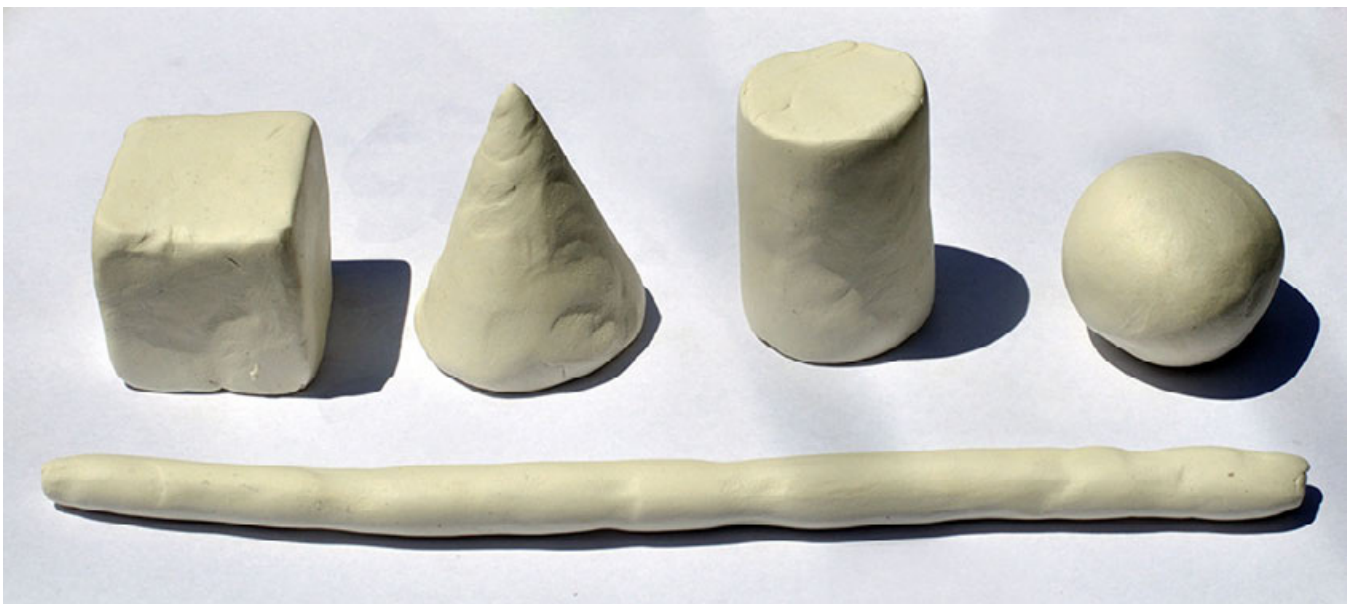


- Shaping the modeling clay

Although truly popular in schools, modeling clay (playdough) remains quite difficult to use. Too often, students do not know how to shape it and consequently experience frustration. Most of the time, it is due to the fact that the students do not work with a sufficient quantity of modeling clay. It is always easier to shape a bigger model rather than a smaller one.

1. The first step consists in giving each and every student a sufficient block of modeling clay, so the chosen subject will be easier to shape.
2. Warming the modeling clay: when cold, the modeling clay can be really hard, even impossible to shape for a child. Therefore, cut the block into several little pieces and ask the students to manipulate these pieces with their hands first to warm them; they can then squash them and roll them on a table. Avoid warming the modeling clay too much, though, otherwise it could become 'flabby' and too soft to work with.
3. Once the modeling clay is sufficiently malleable, it is recommended to start the activity with a basic exercise: the creation of simple forms.

These primary forms do not need to be perfect. They will allow the young students to practise their fine motor functions, will contribute to the development of their spatial perception and will introduce them to the manipulation of the modeling clay.



Preparing Forms

When the subject is chosen, you will have to sensitize the students to the forms composing it. This step is the most important, because once understood, it will allow the students to create with more liberty.

For instance, the few forms shown below could create a beluga or a dolphin:



Once all the forms are assembled:

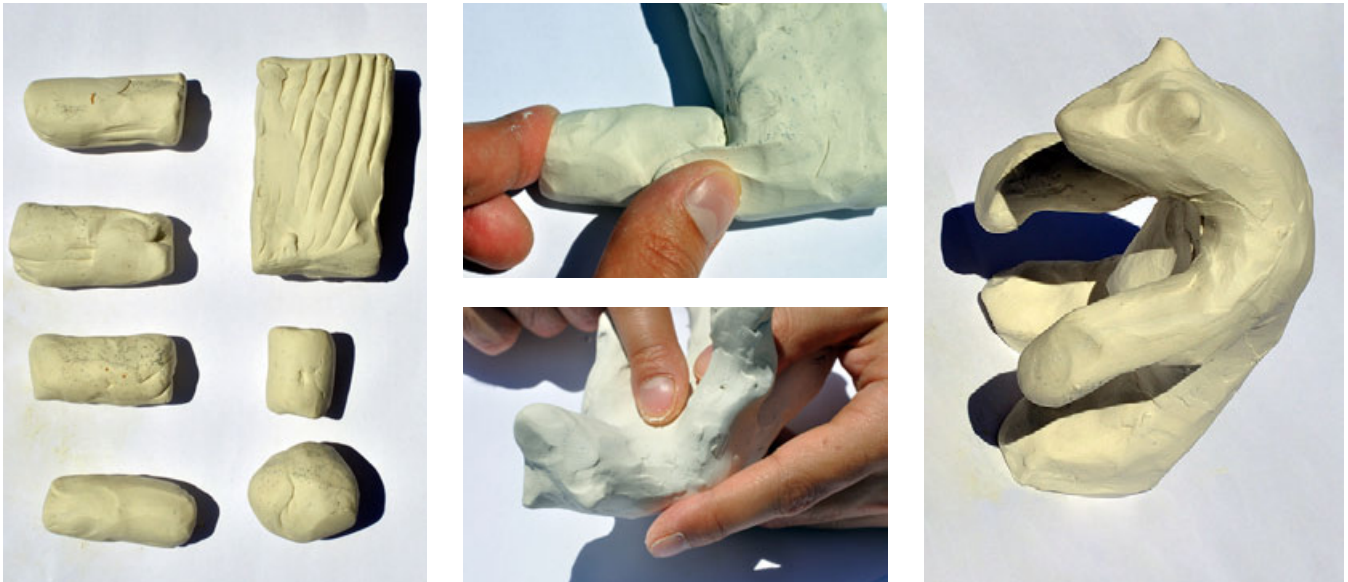


Then, smoothed and stylised a little:



It is not essential to obtain perfectly smooth surfaces; modeling clay may be considered as an ephemeral art and the creations of the young students will have a more symbolic value rather than an artistic one.

Example for creating a bear:



- The clay

Like modeling clay (playdough), clay is easier to work if your model is not too small.

For the benefit of this example, we chose to work on two heads. If you wish to work on another subject, you can refer to the section concerning the modeling clay to prepare the assemblage of your model by creating basic forms.

However, the assemblage of forms requires a few precautions, in order to avoid their separation once the clay has dried.

Avoid assembling forms with smooth surfaces. If you do so, you can be assured that they will not hold...



Instead, use a tool to scarify the two surfaces you wish to join before unifying them.



The Clay Mud ("barbotine"): a mud formed of water and clay

It is strongly advised to prepare a bit of clay mud that you will use like cement for joints between the two forms. You can even put some clay mud on the scarified surfaces before joining them.



- Modeling a Human Head

Start by creating a form resembling a head. Then with a boxwood modeling tool, sketch the general features of the face. You can use a little water if your clay has a tendency to crack.



Eyes are always a bit difficult to achieve. Therefore, we propose here a few steps to make the task easier.

- First, shape a couple of small spheres and place them into the cavities designed to receive them.



- Then, prepare thin half-moons of clay which will be used as "skin" to recover the eyes.



- Finally, smooth the eyelids without pressing too much to avoid smashing the eyes.

For the lips, you can use thin and long cylinders of clay that you attach with the use of a flat tool and clay mud :



- The Finishing Touch

Once your general forms are satisfying, you can linger over details with finishing tools and a little bit of water. If you do not have sharp pointed tools, use a nail.



- The Scooping Out

In some cases, it is impossible to proceed to the scooping out because of the complexity of the model.

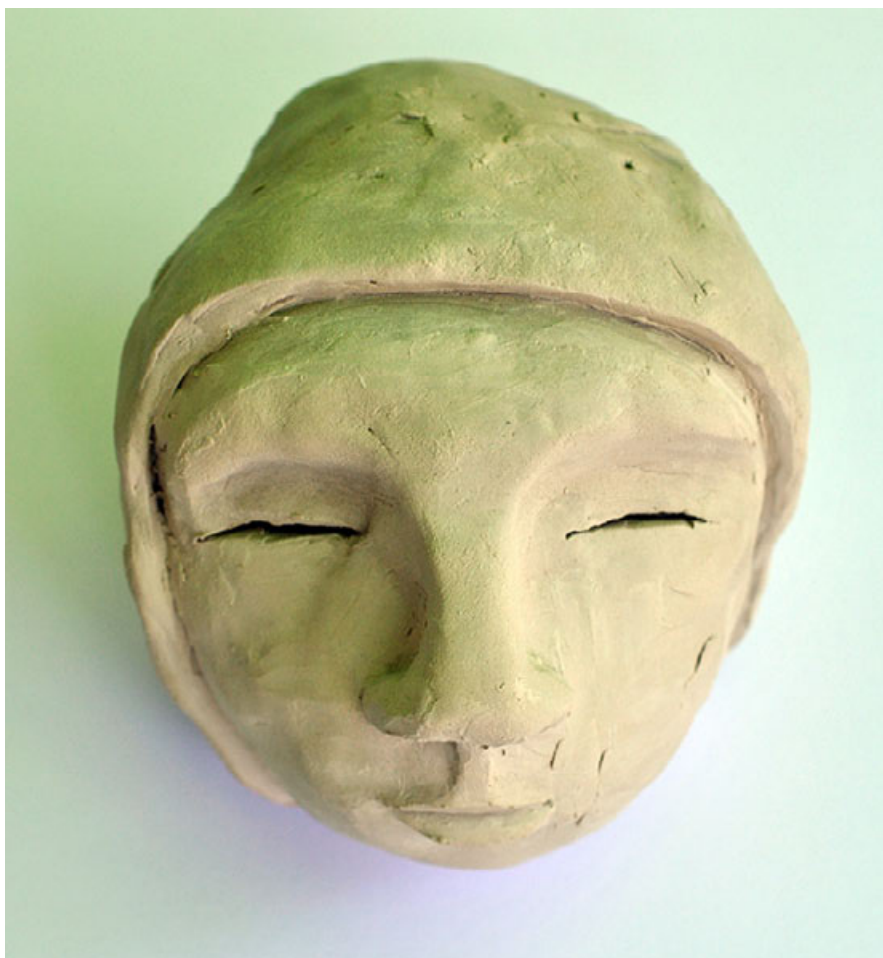
In this present case, it is not only easy to scoop out the model, but it will increase the speed of the drying process and will reduce its weight. The best tools to hollow a model are, without a doubt, the double wire end tools.



If you wish to keep the remaining clay for future use, you can store it in a hermetic bag with a little bit of water.



Our model is now ready. We now need to wait for it to completely dry, which might take a few days.



Once the model is dry, it is now time to sand it.

- The use of sand paper with big grains will contribute to the levelling of the planes.
- Sand paper with finer grains will help smooth out the surfaces and make the traces left by the big grain paper disappear.
- If necessary, you can use a brush to reach difficult places.



Once the sanding is completed, pass a dry cloth over your model to take off all the clay dust resulting from the sanding. If you omit this step, it will be very difficult to paint the model, because the paint will adhere to the dust rather than sticking to the surface itself.

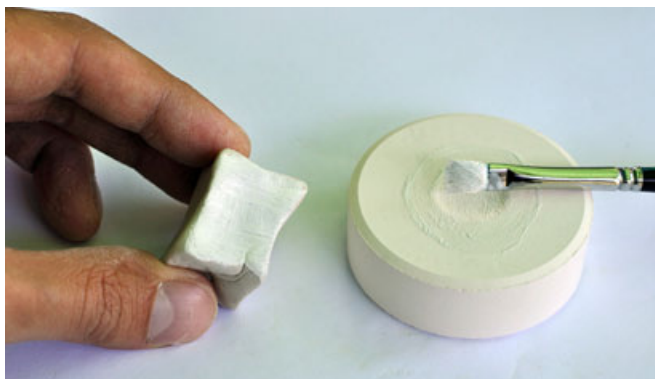


- Painting the model

Discs of watercolours are inexpensive and offer good results, as long as you mix them well enough with some water and a paint-brush. If you don't mix them properly, the colour will be translucent.



Ideally you should have a little piece of dry clay at hand on which you can run some color tests.



After having run some tests, it will be easier to choose the right paint.



Cover the surface abundantly with paint to make sure that nothing remains uncovered. You will probably need more than one coating in order to achieve that.



Once the paint is dry, you can add the final details with the help of a nail or another pointed tool.



Finally, clean the residual dust with a dry rag.



There, the model is completed!
Our Nutaraapik (small baby) is finished!

