



# Clay Exploration

## Overview

Students will explore the possibilities of this natural material. They will create sculptures, paint with clay, or just discover the sensory qualities of this medium.

## Illinois State Early Learning Goals

**State Goal 25:** Know the language of the arts

**Learning Standard A:** Understand the sensory elements, organizational principles and expressive qualities of the arts.

**State Goal 26:** Through creating and performing, understand how works of art are produced.

**Learning Standard A:** Understand processes, traditional tools and modern technologies used in the arts.

## Vocabulary

- Clay
- Nature
- Sculpture
- Painting
- Tools

## Materials

Natural clay

Small natural materials, such as twigs, shells, rocks, or pine cones

Wet Wipes

Paint brushes

Bowls

Vinyl for table cloth

## Procedure

1. Discuss with children where clay comes from. Explain that clay is found in the ground. *In many places in the world, if you dig into the ground, you will find clay! The clay is then cleaned so that people can use it to make things. Clay is one of the world's oldest art materials. Do you have anything made from clay in your house? (Show children examples of items made from clay, such as a ceramic plate, bowl or mug.)*
2. Set out stations in which children can explore clay in various ways. Cover the tables with vinyl tablecloths for easier clean-up:
  - A. *Sculpting table:* Place clay along with various tools used to shape the clay such as rolling pins, wooden carving tools, cookie cutters, etc.
  - B. *Natural materials table:* Have bowls or baskets with natural items such as small pebbles, twigs, shells, pinecones, etc. Encourage children to utilize the materials to build and embellish their clay sculptures.
  - C. *Painting with clay:* Mix clay with water in bowls. Provide children with paper and paintbrushes and encourage them to use the watery clay as "paint."
3. As children work, ask about their process. Discuss with children how they are using the tools. Ask them to tell you about their sculptures or paintings. Ask them what natural materials they are using, and why they selected the particular materials.

## Extension

### **Recording Observations**

Set the clay sculptures out to dry in the classroom. Ask children to predict what will happen. Write down your predictions. Over the next few days have children observe how their sculptures are changing as they dry. (It will get harder and the color will change). *Why is this happening?* Discuss your observations as a class.