

Clay Engraving

What You Do



Materials: air-dry clay or play dough; plastic or wooden carving tools; rolling pins

1. Invite the children to join you to engrave pieces of clay. Demonstrate how to roll out a lump of clay until it is flat.
2. Show the children the different types of engraving tools and model how to hold and use them to create lines in the clay. Talk about the characteristics of each tool.
“See how this tool has a pointy tip: it makes fine lines in the clay. I can use this tool to make letters and write words. This tool has a long, flat tip. It is better for making wider lines.”

3. Invite the children to first roll out the clay and then use the tools to engrave. Encourage them to notice how the tools make different kinds of marks in the clay.
“I see that you have made many different designs in your clay. Which tool did you use to make this spiral shape on the side? Was that tool easy to use in the clay?”
4. When finished, explain to children that the pieces of clay will be left to dry until they are hard, and then they can be displayed in the classroom.

Teaching Sequence

YELLOW	Talk with the child about the marks he makes as he uses a tool to poke or jab at the clay. “You’re making big holes and little holes with the tools. Now you are making tiny little marks.”
YELLOW	Invite the child to practice with different tools to make deliberate marks in the clay. Offer support as needed. Notice how the child holds the tool.
GREEN	“You are holding a tool that has little teeth on the tip. What kind of marks can you make with this tool?”
GREEN	Demonstrate how to hold the tools using a three-point finger grip. Support the child to work slowly and make controlled marks in the clay.
BLUE	“When I hold this kind of tool, I use three fingers. Can you hold your tool using three fingers like this? Let’s try making a design holding it like this.”
BLUE	Encourage the child to experiment with hand placement, holding the tool at different points as he engraves. Discuss how the different placements provide more control over the tool.
PURPLE	“See if the tool is easier to use if you hold it with your fingers a little further from the tip. That way your fingers won’t bump the clay as you carve it.”
PURPLE	Observe how the child is holding and using the tools to engrave the clay. Describe to her what you notice and discuss which tools she feels like she has more control with. “I see that you are holding the carving tool with three fingers. It looks like you have good control over how you are moving that tool. Is it easy to move through the clay holding it like that?”

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Art

- Primary Objective 7**
Demonstrates fine-motor strength and coordination
b. Uses writing and drawing tools
- Related Objectives: 1b, 7a, 8b, 11b, 11e, 20b, 23, 28, 33

Including All Children

- Wrap foam around the carving tools to make them easier to hold.
- Make sure the child is seated comfortably at the table and is able to easily access the tools.
- Use large, slow gestures to give directions.
- Display photos of different types of engraved clay pots or slabs for the children to refer to.
- Provide directions in the child’s home language.**
- Provide instructions with photos of each step.**

Questions to Guide Your Observations

- How did the child grasp and manipulate the carving tools as she created lines in the clay? (7b)
- How did the child show persistence while carving in the clay? (11b)
- In what ways did the child use the carving tools to achieve what he wanted to create in the clay? (11e)

Related LearningGames®

- 128. A Handy Tool

Objective 11

Demonstrates positive approaches to learning

e. Shows flexibility and inventiveness in thinking

Related Objectives: 7b, 8a, 9a, 10a, 14a, 21b, 27, 33

What You Do

- 1. Draw a simple abstract image on the board or a piece of chart paper. Consider using different lines, squiggles, circles, and dots.**
- 2. Show the children the image and ask, “What could this be?”**
- 3. Discuss what the children see in the picture and talk about different aspects of the drawing.**
- 4. Repeat the activity using a new abstract drawing.**

- Invite the children to add more to the picture to turn it into what they see.
- Encourage the children to take turns making their own abstract drawings.
- Use this activity outdoors and invite children to look for images in the clouds.
- Read *It Looked Like Spilt Milk* by Charles G. Shaw after this activity.

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