

**Kindergarten: January**  
**Lesson 3: Pinch Pot**  
**Clay Sculpture**

**Note:** This lesson can easily take 1½ hours. Please remind your teacher and your aides of the longer-than-usual time window and reserve enough time in the art calendar accordingly.

**Note:** Collect a large sampling (50 pieces) of sturdy leaves, and small cuttings from bushes or trees. Camellia leaves, sprigs of rosemary or lavender, hearty ferns, and the like work well to leave natural imprint textures on the pinch pots.

**Objective:** To model a clay pinch pot, using clay forming techniques, adding texture and detail with objects found in nature.

**Technique:** Sculpting with clay

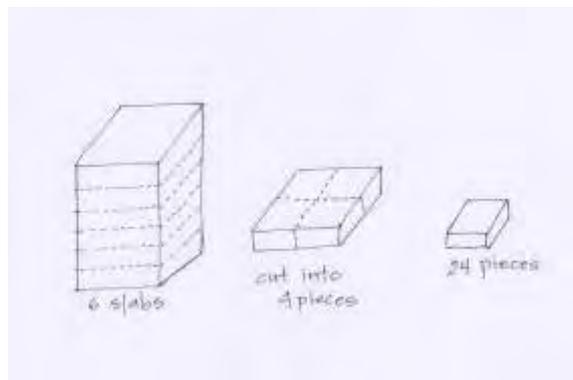
**Set-up: (before lesson starts, docent and aides)**

One and one-half (1 ½), 25 pound blocks of clay

Clay wire with toggle handles to cut clay, and RULER to measure slabs

Plastic (grocery) bags to wrap extra clay pieces (if clay is cut ahead of the lesson)

Clay cutting guide:



**Tip: Clay dries out quickly, if cut in advance (no more than 24 hrs.) wrap each piece individually in plastic (grocery bags work well)**

**Set-up: (before lesson starts, docent and aides)**

Newspaper to cover desks

Clay boards

Spray bottles (use sparingly to keep clay projects moist)

Paper napkins or towels

Toothpicks (used by aides to gently pry leaves off from pots)

Pointed sticks (used by aides to write students' names on pots)

**Visuals:**

Sample artwork  
The Pinch Pot Process

**Props:** Pinch Pot

**Teaching the lesson: (1 ½ hours, total)**

Give your aides a brief summary of the lesson

Introduce yourself and your aides

Today you will make a pinch pot with a textured design using leaf imprints. After it's completely dried, your pot will be fired in a kiln. A kiln is a large hot oven, and firing is the process of heating the clay so that it hardens. I'll come back to help you paint the outside with glaze, which makes it colored and shiny; and then the pinch pots will be fired a final time. When they have been fired and glazed, your finished pots may look something like this: Show sample of pinch pot.

**Note: Throughout construction, direct aides to walk around with a spray bottle to lightly spritz the pots that are starting to look dry/cracked.**

1. Shape the ball (5 min)
  - Take the block of clay in your hands. Make a clay ball by firmly patting the corners into the clay. Press and pat the edges into a ball shape.
  - Do **NOT** roll or fold the clay because trapped air pockets may form. Trapped air pockets will cause the pot to crack and break apart when it is fired.

Note: If a student has “folded” air pockets into the clay, the clay must be wedged to force the air to the surface. Wedging is done by slamming the clay onto the clayboard a few times, and then kneading it like bread dough for a minute or two. Reshape into a ball to proceed. The clay may need to be spritzed with water once shaped.

2. Form the pot (15-20 min)
  - Show visual “The Pinch Pot Process”
  - Press with thumb: Hold your clay ball in one hand. Keep from poking your thumb all the way through your ball—you want to press your thumb a little more than halfway through the middle.
  - To make a pinch pot, you will leave your thumb inside the pot and gently and evenly pinch the outside with your index or forefinger.
  - Carefully squeeze the clay with little pinches to make the walls. Slowly turn your pot with one hand while you pinch it with the other hand. Whenever you press the clay from the outside, you always support the clay from the inside. This will keep the pot sides from falling in.

3. Shape and smooth the pot (15-20 min)

- Move in a slow, careful and steady way. If you press on the clay too fast or too hard, you will tear your pot. Work in a circle, taking a small bit of the clay at a time as you gently press on the walls of the clay pot. Rotate and pinch the clay to gradually form a bowl shape. It will start to push out from the inside as you use your thumb.
- The thickness of the clay should be uniform all the way around the pot. As a guide, the pot should be the thickness of one finger. The base of the pot should be about the thickness of your palm.
- To keep the clay pot from becoming flat and wide like a bowl, remember to press with one hand and support with the other hand.
- Smooth and rub the surface with your thumbs. Ask for a spray of water if your pot looks dry or cracked.

Note: Small cracks or tears can be repaired with a dab of water and by rubbing with your fingertips. The pots need to be smooth and “finished” (free from cracks on the edges, outside and inside pot surfaces) before the leaves are used for texturing. Trying to rub out cracks after the leaf print is made will result in the texture being rubbed away.

4. Smooth and texture the pot (15-20 min)

- Using your choice of leaves, you will make a surface texture. Press your leaves into the clay surface evenly, making sure to rub along the outline of each leaf firmly. Remember to support your pot as you press down on your leaves.
- Show a leaf design. There are two sides to the leaf, one smooth and one with more ridges and lines. To show the texture on the clay, use the underside of the leaf—the lined and ridged side. Just like in shaping the pot, support the pot as you press down on the leaves. Put leaf prints all around the pot: inside, outside, edges. You can also put your pots upside down as you press leaves on the outer surfaces.
- Keep from tearing your pot edges as you lift these objects from the surface. A toothpick might also help, so ask for help if the leaf gets stuck.

Note: If the leaves do not lift from the clay surface without tearing the pot sides, it’s all right to let them remain. During the drying time, the leaves may loosen themselves; or will ultimately be burned off in the firing process.

**Clean-up: (after lesson ends, docent and aides)**

Close the lesson, clean up the classroom

Display sculptures in a safe drying area in the classroom

(cardboard box tops are helpful for keeping the pots)

Return clay materials to bin: clay boards, pointed sticks, and toothpicks

Return all materials to the art closet

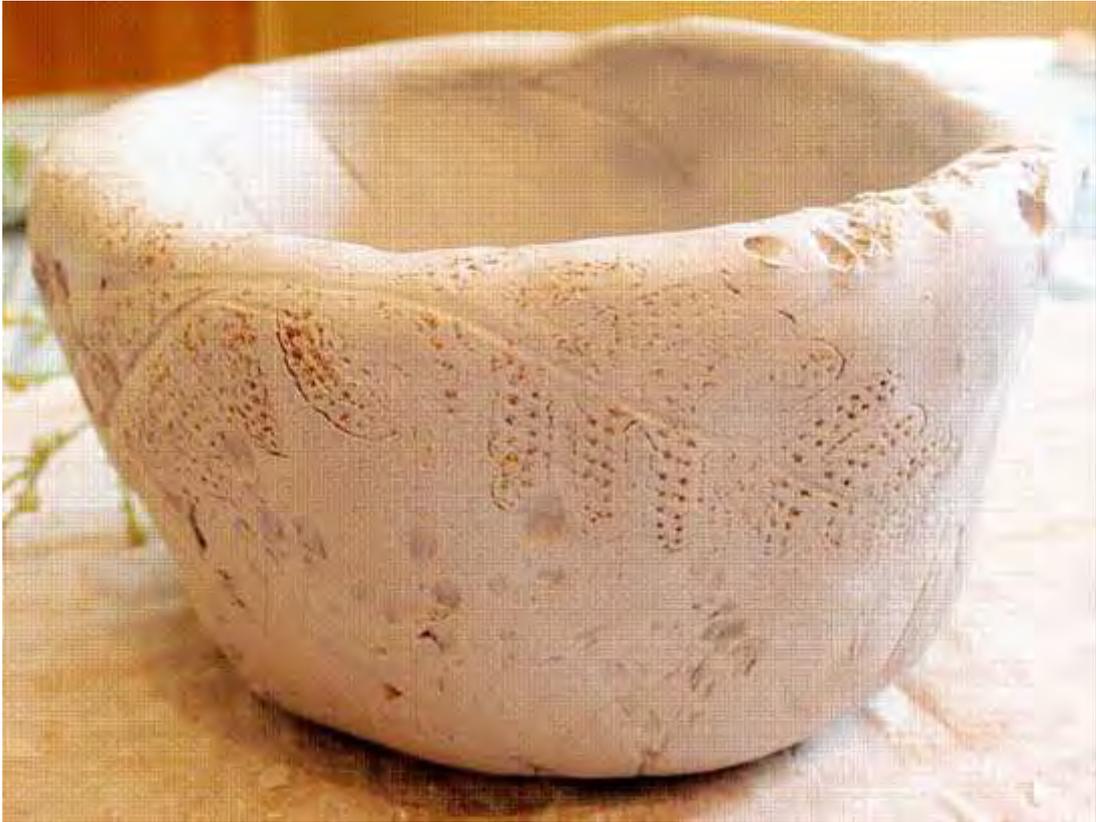
**Finishing the clay projects: (refer to clay schedule)**

Dry in class: Complete drying will take up to five or six weeks. When totally bone dry (will not feel cold or moist to the touch).

Transport to kiln room: The sculptures need to be taken the kiln room (according to kiln schedule) to be bisque fired. Transport clay figures to the kiln room in boxes labeled with room number, teacher name and date, docent name and contact info.

Glazing: After bisque firing is complete, arrange times with teacher for glazing (usually done in small groups at the back of the class during other lessons). The figures can be immediately returned to the kiln room, and then will be glaze fired.

Transport to classroom: After firing, projects need to be picked up and returned to the classroom.



Sample artwork



1. Press with thumb to center of ball.



2. Pinch and rotate, pinch and rotate...



Checking for uniform thickness, supporting from outside when pressing from inside.



Pressing leaves, etc.



PINCH POT HIGHLIGHTS

### The Pinch Pot Process