

What can clay teach you?

Skills, qualities and benefits

- Acquires a sense of his/her body by creating representative models (clay figures)
- Uses his/her senses of touch, sight and smell
 - Tactile perception: hot, cold, smooth, rough, hard, soft, slippery, sticky, gooey
 - Visual perception: matte, shiny, smooth
 - Olfactory perception: different kinds of clay have different smells: some are scented, and you can scent modelling clay yourself; pottery clay has a distinctive earthy smell
- Develops coordination
- Perfects the dissociation of the hand, thumb and fingers from the forearm (necessary for writing)
- Builds strength in arms, wrists and fingers
- Improves fine motor skills and dexterity by manipulating the tools and the clay
- Broadens his/her repertoire of actions: squeezing, pinching, stretching, digging, crushing, hitting, shredding, tearing, flattening, rolling
- Situates himself/herself in space and time: anticipates the tools that will be required, adjusts his/her activities according to the time available
 - Learns to recognize his/her tastes and interests
 - Learns to recognize his/her feelings and emotions
 - Learns to trust his/her instincts
 - Expresses his/her creativity
 - Experiences success
 - Makes decisions
 - Makes choices
 - Takes responsibility
 - Demonstrates autonomy in thoughts and actions
 - Learns from his/her mistakes
 - Becomes aware of his/her increasing proficiency
 - Develops independence
 - Sees himself/herself as a resource for others
 - Learns to concentrate
 - Builds self-esteem: acquires a sense of competency, power, and control over his/her environment (transformation)
 - Relaxes: working with clay is very calming
 - Strengthens his/her emotional stability: therapeutic aspect of working with clay: self-expression, making, un-making (destroying), pounding and hitting are good ways to let off steam
 - Colours
 - Textures
 - Technical processes
 - Characteristics of materials (e.g, some kinds of clay can be used to build tall shapes, while others can't)
 - Solving representational problems (perspective)
 - Aesthetic satisfaction
 - Lateral thinking
 - Balance
 - Symmetry, asymmetry
 - Volumes (3 dimensions): cylinder, sphere, cube, etc., and irregular forms
 - Shapes (2 dimensions): drawing or carving on rolled-out clay

- Constancy of quantity (e.g., concept that a certain quantity of clay stays the same whether it's rolled into a ball or stretched out into a snake)
- Addition (adding a piece)
- Subtraction (removing a piece)
- Counting and numbers (especially when the clay is used to model household items: "I made green peas / I made sausages: there are x of them on the plate.")
- Perspective (various views of the clay model)
- Juxtaposition, layering, alignment
- Balance
- Division (dividing into pieces)
- Length (of a strip of clay)
- Width
- Thickness
- Surfaces and shapes (when the clay is rolled out flat, for instance)
- Comparison (sizes, dimensions volumes)
- Inside, outside, over, under (understanding and applying concepts of inside / outside)
- Organizing and classification (e.g., arranging balls of clay in order of size, or according to one or more properties)
- Duration: modelling time, drying time
- Weight ("It's too heavy, it's falling over!")
- Problem solving ("It's too heavy, it's falling over!")

Other learning outcomes

- Explores his/her surroundings and formulates ideas
- Observes facts, objects, variations in the material (cause and effect: the warmer the clay, the more malleable it is), seeks explanations for physical phenomena (Why is the clay all dried out and cracked? Why won't it hold together?)
- Investigates possibilities and gathers information (e.g., "How is an airplane made?")
- Handles objects and instruments
- Formulates hypotheses ("Maybe if I add a bit here, it will hold together")
- Experiments
- Makes choices
- Shares his/her experience with others ("If you add some at the bottom, it will hold together better")
- Demonstrates persistence—or lack of persistence ("I've had it with this guy—he just won't stand up!")
- Develops work methods
- Demonstrates creativity: uses the materials in an original way, shows imagination, expresses his/her ideas

To complete an activity or project

- Planning an activity or project
- Perseverance, dedication, applied effort (working in a sustained way)
- Anticipating next steps
- Presenting final results, describing difficulties encountered and solutions found
- Evaluating the overall experience (relationship with classmates, project method, degree of satisfaction with the final "product")
- Expressing degree of satisfaction