



Te uku | Clay

Clay is a natural resource that encourages creativity and expression. It can be cut, pinched, rolled, squeezed, and moulded into different shapes and its texture can be changed by adding water. It is an environmentally friendly resource as it can be reused and recycled when it is dry. Clay can be used to create long-lasting shapes. Although clay is similar to playdough, the different texture, consistency, and smell means that tamariki can produce different products and have different experiences when they work with clay.

Links to Te Whāriki

When tamariki work with clay they discover and develop different ways to be creative and expressive (**Communication | Mana reo**). They also gain confidence in and control of their own bodies, including active exploration with all the senses and the use of tools, materials and equipment to extend skills (**Exploration | Mana aotūroa**).



Clay can help tamariki to:

- › develop hand-eye coordination, manipulative skills, and muscular strength
 - squeezing, patting, pounding, poking, and pinching
- › be creative and experience making 3-dimensional objects
- › manipulate through moulding, rolling, cutting, and shaping
- › make sense of form and structure creating different shapes and structures
- › express feelings and ideas through creations.

Adults can support tamariki by:

- › allowing space and time to explore and experiment with textures and shapes
- › providing clay regularly so they become familiar with it and develop their skills
- › working the clay until it is soft enough for small hands to work with
- › role modelling different techniques such as coil building, pinch pots, and slab construction
- › suggesting ways to mould and shape the clay, e.g. rolling, thumping, smoothing
- › asking open ended questions to encourage tamariki to think and talk about their creations.

Providing for clay

Clay needs to be soft for tamariki to work with and this means keeping it damp during the session. Clay is best used on a hessian-covered table or board to stop it from sticking. Roll the clay into soft ball-sized amounts and provide small dishes of water with a small piece of sponge on the table that can help tamariki keep their clay wet.

To store clay, cover it with a damp cloth and store in a plastic bag or an airtight container. If the clay gets really hard, break it up with a hammer and soak it in water. Drain off extra water when the clay has softened. Turn the clay out onto a cloth and sit it on top of the newspaper. Leave it to dry to a manageable consistency before using again. Tamariki enjoy being involved in the process of breaking up and re-wetting dry clay.

Ideas for equipment

tools to enhance the clay experience include::

- › something to cut the clay (a length of nylon fishing line attached to wooden toggles works well)
- › cutlery or wooden clay tools
- › natural resources to decorate and create imprints in the clay like pinecones, pebbles, shells, driftwood and feathers
- › pieces of card for tamariki to take their work home on.

Finding clay

Clay can be bought from an art shop or potters' suppliers. In some areas clay will be available from the natural environment.