

# Make Easy Clay Pinch Pots

Dating as far back as 6000 BC, pottery can be found in all ancient civilizations. Ancient peoples used pottery as tools, as a way to communicate stories, and as objects of beauty. This simple and fun project introduces kids to the art of pottery and offers them a glimpse into how ancient peoples created the very first Neolithic pottery. The finished bowl is great for sprucing up a shelf or counter or storing small knickknacks.

## What You Need:

- Art history books with examples of ancient pottery or photos of pottery downloaded from the Internet
- Newspaper
- Play clothes you don't mind getting dirty
- Tiny bowl of water
- Fist-sized piece of clay, softened by pre-pounding it with help from a parent (air-drying clay available at hobby shops works well for this project)
- Popsicle sticks, spoons, and toothpicks
- Drying area



## What You Do:

1. Look at the examples of ancient pottery in the art books or from the Internet with your child. Ask her to make note of the patterns, geometric shapes, and animal symbols ancient peoples used to decorate their pottery.
2. Cover a table with newspaper and have your child put on her play clothes.
3. Give her the ball of clay and invite her to pound it to soften it further and get out any air bubbles. Have fun with this part!
4. Ask her to roll the clay into a ball between her palms, or between one of her hands and the table. The resulting clay ball should be smooth without cracks.
5. To begin forming the pot, help her push her thumb into the middle of the clay ball, but not all the way through.
6. Help her pull the walls of the pot out to the side with her thumbs, while keeping the walls and base of the bowl at least 1/2" thick on all sides.
7. Show her how to dip her finger in water to help smooth out any cracks or rough spots on her pot. Make sure to not use too much water, or it will turn the pottery muddy.
8. Encourage her to use tools such as toothpicks, spoons, and popsicle sticks to create designs on her pinch pot. Remind her to think of the designs she saw in the example images, such as geometric shapes, patterns, animals and symbols.
9. Allow the pot to dry. If you have access to a kiln, it can be fired for long-term use. If you used air-drying clay, however, it doesn't need to be fired.

## Did You Know?

The first clay pots date back to 6000 BC, around the Neolithic period. People during this time lived a nomadic lifestyle and pottery was too heavy and breakable to be carried. It was common for people to make a similar version of the pinch pots in this activity by rolling a piece of clay into a ball and pushing the thumb into it to create the base of the pot. They also made long snakes of clay and coiled them into pot shapes. The pinch pots were not usually fired, though the coiled pots, which were more durable and meant for more than one use, were probably fired at an open bonfire or campfire.

