

# Double Pinch Pot

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**Sam Andrew** is a ceramicist. He says:

'Here's one of the first things my Mum ever taught me to do with clay when I was a small child: making two pinch pots, joining them together, shaping it, and painting it with slip. I made a beetle with legs and later an ocarina for a school music project.

Here I'm going to demonstrate how to make a basic vessel which is possible with standard clay and air hardening clay. Regular clay must be fired in a kiln in order to be functional. If you don't have access to a kiln then air hardening clay is a really nice way to get your hands making.'



## You will need:

- Clay (either earthenware or stoneware) or air hardening clay
- Pointed knife
- Slurry (clay watered down into a wet paste) or water
- Flat sided wooden stick (paddle)
- Apron

## Optionals:

- Slip (liquid clay for regular clay only) or acrylic paints (for air hardening clay)
- Banding wheel
- Carving tools
- Weighing scales
- Brushes (for painting and applying slip)
- Wire (for cutting clay)
- Hard serrated kidney
- Rubber kidney
- Scissors for cutting paper
- Hairdryer

## Pinching



1. Create two balls of clay of the same size by weighing or estimating.



2. Throw each half of the clay between curved hands until it becomes a ball.



3. Push your thumb into the middle of the ball, leaving roughly  $\frac{3}{4}$  cm in thickness at the bottom.

4. Rotate the ball in your hand, making small pinches between thumb and fingers and gradually moving up the wall. Aim for an even thickness, leaving the rim slightly thicker. Tip: Keep your thumb inside and fingers on the outside, if your finger muscles get tired, take a rest!

Make two pinch pots of the same diameter. Before joining, your clay may need to be dried with a hair dryer if it's very flexible or wet. Dry the pots evenly inside and outside while avoiding the rims as much as possible. It's better to under dry than over dry— they should be flexible, but not sticky.



## Joining



5. Score around the rims of each pinch pot with a knife. You can criss-cross the score marks and add slurry or water to help the clay stick.



6. Place the pinch pots together. This is the most crucial part in the making process! Push one rim into the other by digging your finger in just a little and pushing over to the other side. Repeat all the way round the join. It doesn't need to look neat!



## Shaping



7. Once joined you can gently hit the pot with a stick all over to compress and reinforce the join. Get it into a round shape and knock out the join and pinch marks, patching up any holes using the above technique.

8. Shape the piece to your desired shape. Air hardening clay may not get much taller, but you can use modelling tools to create a smooth surface and define the shape by smoothing up and down.



9. Open the top by pinching to create a lip or cut the top open with a knife and finish neatly.



## For regular clay only:

Leave your pot to dry overnight covered lightly with a plastic bag, or use a hair dryer to dry it evenly, avoiding the rim. The pot is dry enough when it's no longer tacky or flexible and feels like leather (we call this 'leather hard').



Place your pot on a banding wheel and use a serrated kidney to scrape around the shape. Then scrape in an opposing direction around the whole pot to further define the shape.



Using the straight side of the kidney, slightly curved, scrape away the score marks.



Finally, use the rubber kidney to smooth the pot.

## Decorating

10. Decorating your pot is where you can add your personality! I've demonstrated three decoration techniques here— each look nice alone or in combination.

**11. Mark making:** I've used a soft rubber tool to make line marks in the clay, but you can use many different tools that are plastic, wood or metal, sharp or blunt, to get different effects.





**12. Slip decorating and paper resist:** freehand paint with slips or use paper to make more defined lines, shapes or figures. Cut out shapes from paper, dip in water and stick onto the pot, making sure there are no gaps between the paper and the clay.



**13. Paint slip (or acrylic paint if using air hardening clay) over the top.**



**14. When it's almost dry you can peel off the paper to reveal the pattern.**



**15. For sgraffito the slip needs to be very dry— otherwise you'll create rough-looking marks. You may need to leave your pot to dry overnight. Use a carving tool to carefully scratch the slip off in a pattern or image.**



**16. Carving:** Once leather hard you can carve clay. Here I've carved into the marks I made earlier with a sharp carving tool.

### Potential hazards:

**Dust:** dry clay creates dust that is harmful to inhale. Pots shouldn't be scraped when bone dry as this creates the most dust. All clay must be cleaned off the tools after use to avoid this.

**Hair dryer:** drying work too closely can overheat the hair dryer and cause fire.

**Sharp tools:** scissors, carving tools, knife, serrated kidney (you can use plastic modelling tools with children).



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