

3rd Grade: January  
Lesson 3: Clay, Slab Vessel with Attachments

**Note:** This lesson can easily take up to 1 ½ hours. Please remind your teacher and your aides of the longer-than-usual time window and reserve enough time in the art calendar accordingly.

**Objectives:**

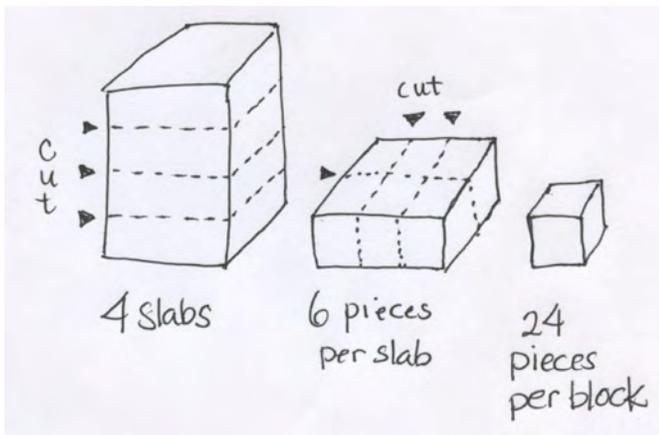
To learn and to practice the process of ATTACHING pieces of clay together.

To construct a slab vessel and add simple attachments using the SCORE, SLIP, ATTACH process.

**Technique:** Hand-building with Clay

**Prep: (1 full block of clay PLUS one quarter of a second block of clay for 30 pieces)**

Before lesson, cut a 25 pound block of clay PLUS ¼ of a second block of clay into 30 smaller cubes. Use small zip lock bags to store cut clay. Spritz with water and securely close the partial bag of the second block of clay.



**Materials and Set up:**

Newsprint to cover desks

Clay tools: tooth picks, pointed wooden sticks, and popsicle sticks

Clay boards

Rollers

Slip and small slip cups (rinse and re-use the cups)

Paper towel

3 Spray Bottles to spritz hands (to be used by docent and aides to spritz fingers and clay as needed)

**ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR SUCCESS WITH CLAY AND HAND BUILDING:**

**Please** communicate these items to the students (over and over) throughout the clay lesson.

1. **FOR ALL SLAB PIECES**, clay thickness should be **ONE HALF INCH thick, and NO THINNER.**
2. **Use the SCRATCH/SLIP/ATTACH process EVERY SINGLE TIME** two pieces of clay are being put together.
3. **ALWAYS use TWO HANDS to attach:** one hand is attaching, the other hand is supporting the attachment site from the backside of the slab.

### Introduction and Instruction:

The students will be learning to make a cylinder vessel from rolled slabs of clay. They will be using their attachment skills to construct their piece. They will end up with a functional and decorative vessel.

Students will **Cut** (with popsicle stick), **Roll** (with wooden roller), **Shape**, and **Attach** slabs and pieces of clay together to construct their hand-built vessels.

The clay pieces should only be rolled to a thickness of one half inch for stability.  
(Please monitor this carefully during the rolling-out stage.)

### The Attachment Method:

The reason for proper attaching is to fuse two pieces of clay together so they don't separate and pop apart when they are drying and/or going through the firing process in the kiln.

### To attach two pieces of clay use the SCRATCH/SLIP/ATTACH process:

**SCRATCH** the surface of both pieces where they will be stuck together **with toothpick or pointed stick**.

**SLIP**: Apply slip to both attachment surfaces.

**ATTACH** the two pieces together, press together, and rub seams. Use **BOTH HANDS** to attach: One hand is attaching from the front, the other hand is **SUPPORTING** the attachment site from the back side of the clay surface/slab receiving the attachment (see demo pictures below). This protects the shape of the vessel.

(Slip is a slurry mixture of clay and water. It is the glue used to attach pieces of clay together.)

### Getting Started

#### 1. CUTTING THE CLAY

A. Use the popsicle stick to cut the cube in half.

Take one of the halves and cut it in half again so there are three pieces, one large, and two smaller.



B. Take one of the smaller pieces and roll it into a ball. Press it and gently roll it into a fat disc, about one half inch thick, or slightly thicker.



C. Take the large piece of clay, **ROLL** it in **ONE DIRECTION ONLY**, back and forth, to make a long rectangle that is **NO THINNER** than one-half inch thick.

**TRIM** the short sides to make straight edges.



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## 2. BUILDING THE VESSEL

### A. Start with the large rectangle.

The short ends of the rectangle will be attached to each other to make a cylinder. Use the **tooth pick or pointed stick** to scratch hash marks into the surface of both ends of the slab of clay.

Use a **finger** to coat each scratched end with **SLIP**.

Gently shape the slab into a cylinder and **press** the two ends together until they mush into a seam that can be rubbed smooth with thumbs and fingers.



### B. ATTACHING Cylinder to the Base.

Gently place cylinder onto base to make sure the base is large enough and to mark it's position in order to know where to scratch and attach the cylinder and the base.

**SCRATCH,**  
**SLIP, and**

**ATTACH** cylinder to base.

Use **BOTH HANDS** to press and shape cylinder during the attachment process.

Use the **popsicle stick** to **TRIM** off excess base.

Use thumb and fingers to smooth surfaces to make the joint between the two pieces disappear.



### 3. BUILDING AND ATTACHING ADDITIONAL PIECES OF CLAY

- A. Use remaining piece of clay to make (2) additional pieces of clay to attach to vessel.

Keep it SIMPLE. Allow time for 2 – 3 attachments.

*Attachment suggestions: make a head and a tail, or surface patterns.*

**\*\* DO NOT allow students to make handles.**

*They can be unstable and take volume inside the kiln.*

**\*\* Avoid delicate and fragile appendages.**

- B. For head and tail pieces: Roll Clay to a one-half inch thick slab to match the thickness of the cup.  
Cut the slab in half in order to make two shapes to attached to the vessel.

- C. Remember to always use the SCRATCH/SLIP/ATTACH process for each new piece.

And ALWAYS use both hands to attach and support the area being attached in order to protect the shape and thickness of the vessel.

#### D. Finishing Touches

1. Use pointed stick to add any final details to the vessel if needed.
2. Carefully and legibly write student initials and room number on the bottom of the vessel.
3. Use clean (moist) fingers to smooth away any crumbs or cracks in the clay surface.

### 4. CLEAN UP AND STORAGE OF POTTERY

Clean up and sort tools and materials.

Check each vessel for name and number on the bottom.

Use box lids, boxes, or trays to transport pottery back to classroom for drying.

When the pottery is bone dry (at least a month) it will be fired in the kiln and returned to class for glazing. When glazing, be sure to keep bottom of pieces free of glaze so they don't get stuck to the kiln shelf during firing.

Schedule glazing times with your teacher. Bring an assortment of glaze colors and enough brushes to have a brush for each color. Allow students to use up to three colors for their vessel. Painting two thin coats is safer than one thick coat of a glaze. Use a damp sponge to clean off any glaze that has dried on the bottom of the vessel.

Label all boxes with class #, teacher, and your contact info before delivering to kiln room according to glazing schedule.



SAMPLE SLAB VESSELS  
WITH SIMPLE ATTACHMENTS



GEOMETRIC  
FLOWER  
DESIGN