

Coil-Built Pueblo Bowls

from Amaco®, American Art Clay Company

This lesson gives students the opportunity to explore Native American pottery traditions and discover the purpose behind the animal imagery and geometric patterns used to decorate various pottery forms. Using low-tech molds, students will form a small, coil-built bowl with either self-hardening clay or pottery (kiln-fired) clay. Personal symbols and patterns may be applied as decoration, using either AMACO glaze products or acrylic paints (if a kiln is not available). Students with kiln access will learn how to use underglazes and glazes to transform their bowls into functional ware.

Grade Levels 3-8

Preparation

1. Teachers must select the clay to be used based on the color of the clay and whether the pieces will be kiln-fired or left to air-dry. AMACO self-hardening and pottery clays are available in red, gray and white.
2. Check the consistency of the clay, especially if it has been recycled, to ensure that the clay will easily stick together when joined. If clay is too stiff, drip some water into the bag, seal it and allow the moisture to be absorbed, preferably overnight.

Process

1. Show images or samples of hand-built pottery bowls and demonstrate the technique described below to the class.
2. Give each student about 1-lb of clay (a teacher's fistful), one disposable bowl and one coffee filter.
3. Begin making bowl by rolling an even coil (snake) about 10" long and a finger thick, then wind it around itself to create a patty. Smooth the coils together on both sides of the patty (the coils should blend together easily without the addition of water or slip; if not, see #2 under Preparation).
4. Place fluted coffee filter inside the bowl to create a mold (the filter allows the bowl to be easily lifted and prevents it from sticking to the bowl). Press the patty into the center of the bowl to create the base.
5. Roll another coil of similar thickness and wrap it around the base, while pressing against the sides of the mold. Show the students how to support the exterior of the bowl while pressing from the inside.
6. Continue rolling and pressing coils until the edge of the bowl is reached and then attempt to even the top (lip) of the bowl. At this time all the coils may be smoothed together on the interior by rubbing against the seams (at a right angle).
7. Gently pull the clay bowl out by lifting from the filter; flip the mold upside down and place a second filter on its exterior. Now flip the clay bowl onto the fresh filter, peel away the old filter and join the coils on the outside of the bowl. Either carefully remove, smooth interior and set out to dry, or leave to set up on mold for a couple of hours. Allowing the bowl to dry evenly and slowly will prevent cracking.
8. To finish, decorate with patterns and animal imagery according to the clay used:
 - **Self-Hardening Clays:** After drying completely, sketch pattern with pencil and paint with acrylics. After paint is dry, cover bowl completely with AMACO All-Purpose Sealer to seal and strengthen.
 - **Firing Clays:** Bisque fire bowl to Cone 04 after drying completely; then sketch pattern on bowl using a pencil. Paint selected AMACO LUG Underglaze colors, applying background colors first. Apply 2-3 coats of each underglaze color for completely opaque finish, allowing to dry in between coats. Leave areas unpainted to incorporate clay body color. Apply 2-3 coats of AMACO Lead-Free F-10 Clear Transparent Glaze for brighter color or dinnerware use (leave bottom of bowl unglazed). Glaze fire to Cone 05 or 06.



Materials

For Fired Bowls:

AMACO® Clay, 50-lb carton, [No. 67 Indian Red Earthenware \(30506-3050\)](#) **OR** [No. 25 White \(30505-1025\)](#)

[AMACO® Lead-Free Underglazes 12-Pint Class Pack, \(30417-0129\)](#)

[AMACO® F-10 Clear Transparent Glaze, Pint \(30406-1026\)](#)
optional

For Non-Fired Bowls:

AMACO® Self-Hardening Clay, 25-lb carton:
[White Stonex™ \(33247-1025\)](#),
[Gray Marbled™ \(33204-2525\)](#)
OR [Red Mexican™ \(33205-3025\)](#)

[AMACO® All-Purpose Sealer, 8-oz jar \(34900-1008\)](#), optional

[Blickrylic Economy Acrylic Paint \(00711-\)](#)

Both Projects:

Paper/styrofoam bowls

Basket-style coffee filters

Metal spoon

[Dynasty® Ruby student synthetic brush assortment \(05198-0729\)](#)

National Standards

Content Standard #1 —

Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

K-4 Students use different media, techniques and processes to communicate ideas, experiences and stories

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

Content Standard #3 — Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas

K-4 Students select and use subject matter, symbols and ideas to communicate meaning

5-8 Students use subjects, themes and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks

Content Standard #4 —

Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

K-4 Students demonstrate how history, culture and the visual arts can influence each other in making and studying works of art

5-8 Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures