

Clay Puzzled Gnomes

By Artist Michael Harbridge

See this technique in action! Video recording of the live webinar available at www.ceramicarts.com.

Materials List

Moist clay
(preferably with some sand or grog)

Supplies by ClayPuzzling.com
(Clay Puzzling Globe Molds of choice
depending on size)

BP-Tree21 21" Cone Mold
BP-Tree12 12" Cone Mold

RSET-POT1 Clay Tool Set
PB3 Project Board
EXTRUDE2 Short Extruder
PS02 Mini Extruder
Rubber Leaf Forms

Brushes by Royal & Langnickel
SG825-6 Stiff fan
SG250-3 Round Gold Taklon
SG595-0 Liner Gold Taklon
R2845-6 Glaze Fan Brush
Slip (compatible with clay body chosen)

Slab Roller or Rolling Pin (optional)
Assorted glazes by Mayco

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Clay with sand or grog was used with this project because it helps give support and strength to the shape as it's built. Any clay body can be used. Be sure to select colors appropriate for the clay body and fire to recommended cone temperatures.

Step 1) Wrap the cone with one layer of newspaper. Tuck extra inside bottom of cone. Tape into place if needed.

Step 2) Flatten chunks of moist clay between your fingers. Generally, about a quarter to half inch in thickness is sufficient. However, thicker clay may be needed on larger items, shapes which will have textures added, or items where parts are adhered. Try to keep the thickness of clay as uniform as possible. Cover the entire exterior of cone with clay. Mash the clay together in all joints. Use a flexible metal rib to flatten all clay together by pulling up from the bottom of the cone and down from the top. You can also use a rolling pin or slab roller to make a slab to wrap around the cone.

Step 3) Roll a coil of clay about an inch thick that will wrap around the clay cone to be the rim on the hat. Think about how big you want the face and body when positioning. Press the coil so it's up higher in the front than the back. Use your thumb to mash the top on the coil into the hat. You can score and slip this attachment, but because it's being mashed into the hat, it's not required.

Step 4) Roll a ball of clay for the nose and eyes if you will have eyes. Score and slip them in place.

Step 5) Fill the extruder with clay and extrude strands of clay for the hair. Break the hair off in bunches to be slightly longer than you anticipate needing.

Step 6) Score the entire area where the hair will be added. Slip a small section at time and position hair starting under the rim of the hat. Kind of "tuck" the



Instead of using coils for the hair, use the rubber leaf forms.



Be sure to allow items to dry sufficiently. The image to the right shows what can happen if items have moisture.

bunches of hair and you can position the hair straight down, or bunch it up a little as you work it down so it has some wave to it.

Step 7) Roll balls of clay for the shoes and shape as desired. Score, slip and attach. For the edge sitting version, start with a larger ball of clay and stretch it to have legs. Feel free to press the bottom of the show on a textured surface to pick up texture.

Step 8) Create hands and arms my making a clay paddle shape about a half inch thick. Use the needle tool to cut the wide end of the paddle to separate into four fingers and a thumb. Pinch the clay sections to form fingers and thumb. Use wooden tools to get between and smooth.

Step 9) If just having hands, score and slip in position. If making longer arms, cut in hole in the side of the cone and score and slip the arm into the opening. Toothpicks can be inserted in clay arms to add support. They will burn away in firing. You can also prop sponges, wads of clay, paper or other materials to support the arms until firm.

Step 10) Create any clay additions like the shovel and seed packet. Score and slip in place. Sometimes it's easier to form fingers and remove these additions and add them with glue after painting, or by attaching in the glaze firing. It's often easier to paint this way.

Step 11) Use a damp sponge or brush to smooth imperfections. Don't use so much water that your creation is sitting in a puddle of water. Get creative! How can you personalize your creation? Add a belt, back pockets or other enhancements.

Step 12) Allow sufficient drying time. Note my picture below of what can happen if the clay is not dry and you try to push the firing process. I suggest a week of drying naturally, then place them on top of a hot kiln as other items fire to dry further. Many kilns also have an option to soak items to dry them fully. Explore those options as well.

Step 13) Decorate with fired or non-fired finishes appropriate for the clay body selected.





Additional Options

The gnome to the left had rubber leaf impressions made in the hat and dimensional leaves were added instead of coils for the hair. Layer the leaves starting at the bottom working your way up. Score and slip each leaf and mash the top of the leaf into the cone, and overlap with the next leaf.

The small extruder was used to make the hair on the cute elf in the images above. A ball was added to the top of the hat and texture was added around the rim of the hat. Pointy ears were added along with pointy shoes. And this elf is wearing mittens, so no fingers were required. A clay present was constructed to sit in front of him.

To the right, you'll see a snowman constructed with a pointy nose and less hair. A scarf was made with a ribbon strip of extruded clay, Clay buttons were scored and slipped to the front. Arms are textured to look more like wood branches.

Check out all the other great shapes and creations you can make with these cone molds. You'll find other great webinar recordings for these methods at www.ceramicarts.com. Make trees, witches, wizards and so much more!

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Witches and wizards start out with the same coverage of the cone with clay, Face, hands and hair are added and then 100% cotton fabric is dipped in slip and draped.

Trees can be created with solid coverage and have textures added. They can also have dimensional branches added. Or, make them with coils and glaze them green, white, or raku fire them.

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Get clay puzzling cones in two sizes at www.claypuzzling.com.

