Using clay as a medium for art has lots of fun possibilities. You can use your own creativity to incorporate elements of art and principles of design into your artwork.

Creating clay coils is a simple technique with many possible outcomes. You can practice this technique with natural clay or with a homemade clay made from ingredients in your kitchen (things like flour, salt, and/or cornstarch).

Begin with a small piece of clay. Roll it out on a solid surface so that it is the shape of a snake or sausage. Continue to roll with your entire hand - rolling evenly from your wrist to your fingertips - opening your hand wide as the coil gets longer. It takes some practice to get an evenly shaped coil. Once you’ve mastered a coil that is long and even (like a straw), use the coil to create different types of coil shapes:

- Spirals (rolled like a cinnamon roll)
- Arches (like a rainbow)
- Donuts
- Folds (like a ribbon candy)
- Twists
- Braids

How can you combine the different coil shapes to create a piece of clay artwork with a variety of elements of art and principles of design?
Put Your Project Into Action

Show Your Skills
- Report about a favorite clay artist's work
- Examples of design elements or art principles using clay as a medium
- Portfolio of work you have created using clay
- Photo or digital display of famous art pieces made from clay

Service and Leadership
- Teach younger members how to create an art piece using clay
- Make and donate clay artwork to a local nursing home
- Create clay artwork and donate it to a fundraising event or auction in support of a local cause
- Volunteer at a local art event or art show
- Invite an artist to teach a workshop at a 4-H club meeting
- Volunteer to serve on a local Art Council

Entrepreneurship
- Create and sell your artwork online or at local shows
- Design and sell clay ornaments featuring a school mascot or club / organization emblem (with copyright or trademark permission)
- Teach art classes featuring clay

Technology Connection
- Digital ceramics
- Ceramic 3D printing
- Digital fabrication

Connecting with a Mentor
- School art teacher
- Community college art instructor/students
- Local art museum staff or volunteers/docents
- Network with artists at community craft/art shows

Events
- Local and state 4-H workshops or shows
- Classes offered through local community colleges, park districts, or museums
- Local, state, and national art competitions
- Community craft / art shows

Start a Conversation
Who are the most fascinating clay artists that you’ve learned about?
What are the most interesting clay pieces that famous artists have created?
What is a new clay technique that you would like to learn?

Want to learn more?
go.illinois.edu/4Hclay

Explore more at Illinois 4-H!
4-H.extension.illinois.edu

Careers for People Interested in Clay
Potter
Art Teacher
Art Museum Director
Industrial Designer
Art Therapist
Dental Ceramist

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Credits: University of Wyoming Extension 4-H project sheet | New Mexico State University 4-H project sheet | 4-H Spark Sheets are a collaborative effort of 4-H staff, volunteers, alumni, and teens from across Illinois. A big thanks to the many contributors and reviewers!