

## Sculpting A Human Figure

There are many sculptures which can be made from clay. Here are instructions to make a human figure using coil construction. Material: gray or terra cotta sculpture clay, about the size of half a loaf of bread Tools: fingers; two or three wood tools of various shapes; plaster bat about 5" x 5" Visualize, and sketch if you wish, the particular pose or action you wish your figure to assume. For example, you may have a standing pose - a cowboy standing with legs apart and his hands on his hips; a boxer; or a man lifting a log, or carrying a box on his back. Wedge the piece of clay thoroughly. Each time clay is used - before beginning any project, or when resuming work if a piece is put away before completion - the clay must be wedged. The purpose of wedging is to remove all air pockets and holes which would cause a piece to explode in the firing; to eliminate foreign matter such as nails, cloth, and leaves; and to secure an even consistency. Never use unwedged clay. The clay is patted or rolled into a flat rectangular mass, cut in two with a wire or knife, and the two pieces slammed together on the table with the cut edges facing in opposite directions It is then rolled and kneaded like dough, patted into a rectangular mass, cut in two, and slammed together with the cut ends facing in opposite directions. This operation is repeated about twenty times. If you have a wedging table, the clay is cut in two by pushing it against the wire. Now make a base about 4" square by patting a piece of clay to 3/4" thickness. Roll out a coil to 3/4" in diameter. Cut a piece of it and shape it into a V for the legs. Fix the legs by welding the ends (feet) to the base. Allow a few minutes for the legs to become firm. In setting the legs, arrange them in the action and shape of the figure you have in mind. Make a smaller coil, about 1/4" in diameter, and from it build a torso by making several rings or ovals of clay and setting them on each other. Weld them together and fill in any hollow space in the center so that the torso is solid. Any spaces left inside the form will cause the piece to blow up in the firing. Now add vertical strips of the 1/4" coil over the torso to give more thickness. Weld these together. When the torso is firm, add arms with coils about 1/2" thick. Score and paint joints with slip first. Add the head. Model the figure by adding or cutting away the clay with fingers and tools. Cut away the base if you wish with a knife or piece of wire after the sculpture is firm. The piece is now ready to be fired. After firing it will have a terra cotta or buff mat finish, depending on which clay you have used. It needs no decoration as the clay is interesting in surface and color. Other figures - poses such as reclining or seated figure - can be done by the same process as that described above.

## About the Author

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