

Handbuilding

made easy with plaster tools by Creative Paradise, Inc.

Summer Fish

- Level: Easy
- Duration: Short (1-2 hrs)

Materials Needed:

5 lbs. of low fire white moist clay, Small oval hump (CPI HPO4) one yard of canvas, 8.5 x 11 paper, XL rolling pin, Sandbag (place one cup of play sand into handkerchief and tie to close), wooden fettling knife, small round sponge, various shades of underglaze.

Plaster forms and tools can be successfully used to create imaginative and unique clay pieces. Because of the absorbent nature of plaster, clay can be depressed into highly detailed sprig molds and lifted from the mold without sticking. Minute details can be successfully transferred from plaster to clay. The absorbent plaster forms help to assure an even and timely draw of moisture from the clay body, limiting cracks and sticking. Convex plaster forms are known as "hump molds" while concave plaster forms are known as "slump molds". Plaster forms help even the first-time student create clay hand building projects with fantastic results!



1. Cut a piece of clay from a block of moist low fire white clay. The piece should be approximately 1 1/2" thick and 6" x 6". Flatten the clay onto your canvas with the palms of your hands. This will help remove any deadly air pockets. If you see any little air bubbles under the surface, poke them with a sharp tool and flatten the area. Use a rolling pin to evenly flatten the clay. Roll twice and then pick up the clay and turn it over and roll twice on the opposite side. Repeat this until the clay is between 1/2" and 1/4" thick. You can use dowel rods or rulers to ensure a nice even slab, but on a small project such as this, it isn't mandatory.

2. Draw a simple fish on a standard 8.5 x 11 piece of paper (or print out [our template here](#)) and place the paper with the fish drawing over the clay. With a pencil or other pointed object, trace the fish drawing into the clay. Lift the paper. Using a cleaning tool or fettling knife cut along the fish outline and lift the excess clay from the fish.

3. Transfer the fish to the top of the oval hump (SP04 Oval Hump). Use the sandbag to lightly form the clay to the hump. Use a moist sponge to clean the edges of the fish.

4. While the clay is setting up on the plaster hump, create either a coil or ball feet (ball feet are easier for beginners). A great tip for creating nice clean and even coil is to draw a loop tool through a clean piece of clay cut from the block of clay. Join the edges together and smooth the joining area to create a fantastic looking coil foot. Score both the feet and the fish where the feet will be added and use slip to attach the feet (To create slip, Put DRY clay trimmings in about 1/4 cup of water and stir after the trimmings have dissolved). Use a small board on the feet and lightly tap the feet to create a level surface.



5. Allow the fish to become leather hard before removing. You can spread the drying time with the careful application of heat from a blow dryer or heat gun. Apply underglaze to the clay surface. Use a cleaning tool to scratch through the underglaze wherever a sgraffito effect is desired. Allow the clay to dry completely and fire to 04. Apply clear glaze and fire according to manufacturer's directions.