

Lizard Mound County Park

Lesson Plan

Grade 4

MAKING COILED CLAY POTS

(The Woodland Indians/Mound-builders of the Lizard Mound County Park used coils of clay to make their pottery)



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Strand: art, science (archeology), social studies,
language arts, history





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Grade Level: grade 4

Location: classroom

Objectives:

- learn Woodland Indian pottery-making techniques
- learn or review terms listed in **Vocabulary**
- create a coiled clay pot
- gain an appreciation of the Woodland Indian potter skills
- practice sequencing skills

Vocabulary:

- archeologists- scientists who study things that people have made, used and left behind
- coils of clay- clay rolled into snake-like shapes
- clay- fine pieces of soil that are pliable when wet and can be hardened with air and heat
- firing- applying heat to harden a clay container
- pottery- containers or pots made with hardened clay
- shard- a piece of broken pottery

Materials: modeling clay or Play Dough (recipe included), sticks or tools for decorating their pots, scissors, glue, piece of paper

Resources: (Printables are included with the lesson plan and are on separate sheets.)

- **How They Did It** printable reading for information sheet (part 1)
- **Important Things to Remember About Woodland Potters** printable sequencing activity (part 1)
- **Making a Simple Clay Coil Pot - Teaching Clay to Elementary Students**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62-7qHckMMM> - 12 minute video (part 2)

Procedure: (Lesson plan consists of two parts)

Part 1 Studying Woodland Indian Pottery

1. Tell the children that the Woodland Indians who built the mounds made their own tools and pots for cooking and for eating. Today we are going to learn how they made their pots. Who knows what pottery is? (*containers made from clay and then hardened*)
2. Tell them that they will read information about how the Woodland People Mound-builders made pottery.
3. Hand out the **How They Did It** reading printable. The information sheet could be read independently, with a partner, or as a whole group.
4. When they are done reading, hand out the printed **Important Things to Remember About Woodland Indian Potters** sequencing sheet. Students should cut out the mixed up steps and paste them in the correct order on a piece of paper.

Part 2 Making a Coiled Pot

Note to teacher: *The video under Resources demonstrates a good basic method that would be useful for both student and teacher. Written steps for making a coil pot are also included below. If cost is an issue, use the Play Clay recipe that is included with this plan. If you choose to work with some modeling clay, it might be necessary to moisten your hands and keep this type of clay covered with a damp towel to keep it from drying out.*

1. Tell students that they will be making pots much like the Woodland people did a long time ago using the same coil wrapping method. However, they will not have to gather their own clay or temper it (*adding crushed rock, sand or ground up clam shells*).
2. Demonstrate the process by showing the video **Making a Simple Clay Coil Pot** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62-7qHckMMM>) in the **Resources** or model the process.
3. Hand out a moist ball of model clay or the prepared Play Clay. Knead the clay to remove all of the bubbles.
4. Roll a piece of clay out on a flat surface to create a long coil about 12 inches long and as thick as your finger or with smaller hands, their thumb.
5. Roll other lumps of clay into long snakes or ropes of equal thickness. Cover them with a damp paper towel.
6. Press the first snake/coil into a spiral shape to form the base and smear the coils. Or press flat a circular shape with the clay for the base. (*Both methods are shown in video*).
7. Score all around the edge of the base and along the sides of the coils so that they will hold together better.
8. Build up the sides of the pot by adding more coils to the base. Each row of coils should be pressed or pinched onto the row below it to bond them together.

9. Keeping the model clay moist while adding coils is important for bonding.
10. Repeat this process with the other coils until the pot is the size you want it to be.
11. Finish the pot by smoothing the coils inside and outside.
12. Add a decoration by using a stick or fingernails to make lines in the wet clay.

Play Clay Recipe

This recipe produces a soft and cooperative clay for about 2 clay pots. The recipe has a fairly long drying time, but the pots will dry eventually. If stored in an airtight container, the dough will last for 2 to 4 weeks.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 cup salt
- 1 tsp. vegetable oil
- 1/2 tsp. cream of tartar

Directions:

- Step 1.** Mix all ingredients together in a saucepan and cook over medium heat until the mixture holds together (keep stirring or it will stick to the bottom of the pan).
- Step 2.** When the clay is cool enough to touch, it can be kneaded on a floured board.

Sources:

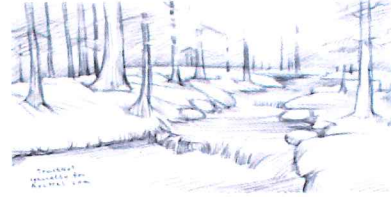
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How They Did It

Archeologists have learned that the Woodland people who built mounds in the Lizard Mound Park made their own tools and created pots for cooking and eating. They used a *coil method* to make their *pottery*. Read the following steps and learn how they did it.

Step 1

The Woodland Indians dug clay from the ground, which can be found in many different areas, but was often found along a creek or in a wet area.



Step 2

The clay was pounded to remove any lumps.

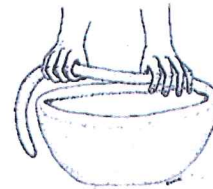
Step 3

Then the clay was mixed with water to feel like play-dough. Crushed rock, sand or ground up clam shells were added to the clay to keep it from shrinking or cracking when the clay was *fired* or dried. Now the clay was ready to be made into a pot.



Step 4

The Woodland Indian potter would make the bottom or base of the pot with long *coils* or ropes of clay. Other coils were then added onto the base to build up the sides of the pot.



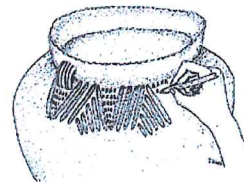
Step 5

After the pot was shaped, the potter would smooth the inside and outside surfaces with his or her fingers or with a piece of shell or stone. Smoothing or smearing the coils of the pot helped hold the pot together.



Step 6

The potter would usually add patterns or designs to the outside of the pot. Some pottery was decorated by using a stick or fingernail to cut lines or designs into the wet clay.



Step 7

The pot was allowed to dry, and the last step was placing it in a fire. Burning bark or wood was placed around the pot, which was left in the hot fire until the clay became hard.



Important Things to Remember About Effigy Mound Builders



The following steps of making Woodland pottery are all mixed up. Cut the strips on the dotted lines. Paste the steps in the right order on a piece of paper.

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The base of the pot was often made with coils.

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The Woodland Indians smoothed the inside and outside of the coils on the pot to help it hold together.

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Clay was found in a wet areas and then dug up for making pottery.

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The potters added more coils to the base and built up the sides of the pot.

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The Mound-builders added water to the clay to make it more workable.

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Designs were put into the wet pot with fingernails or a stick.

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The completed pot was set out to dry and then put in a fire to harden it.

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To make the pots stronger, crushed rock, sand or ground up clam shells were added to the clay.