

Coil Basics

1. A coil is a long rolled snake of clay. Roll or squeeze the clay into a hot dog. Place the clay on a clean flat surface. With your palms resting on top of the hotdog, move your hands so that the clay rolls from your fingertips, across your palm, all the way to the heel of the hand and back to the tips. Slide your hands lengthwise across the coil as it gets longer. See “troubleshooting” below.



2. Make a base. This can be a 3/8in slab, pinch pot, or wheel thrown pot (see tutorials on slabs & pinch pots), but DO NOT make the base out of a spiral of coils. It will likely crack. Make the base round, or play with different shapes.



3. Attach your coils to the outside perimeter of the base. You should scratch and add slip for each layer. **See the “Tips for Success” Section below about how to attach properly.**
4. Continue to build up with coils. To make a piece with straight walls, stack coils directly on top of each other. To make a piece that angles out, stack coils slightly further out than the level below. To make a piece that angles in, stack coils slightly

Coil Basics

in from the coil below. Coils can be twisted, swirled, cut, curled, and beaded to create intricate designs on the outside of your pot. Have fun!



5. After adding several layers, blend the inside of the pot together using the rounded end of a tool or your fingers. You are not just trying to smooth the clay, you are actually combining each coil with the ones above and below it.



6. If you create intricate designs, you may have holes in between design elements. If you don't want holes, add clay to the inside to fill gaps. Smooth the inside!

7. If you create a piece with an intricate design, make sure you add at least one coil to the top to hold all the parts together. If your rim got thin or cracked, you can scratch and attach a thicker coil to the rim to strengthen it.





Coil Basics

Possible Coil Projects



Troubleshooting Coils



This top coil is too thin, and is uneven. It will result in uneven walls, thin walls, an uneven rim, and will break easily.

This coil is also uneven, but it is thick. Same problems, but it will be a chunky pot with random weak spots and an uneven rim.

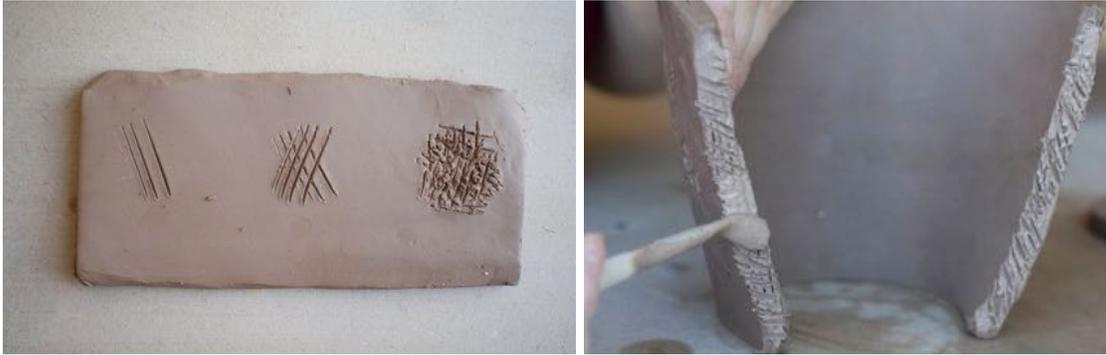
This coil is not uniform or round. It is oval. It could make a thick chunky pot with uneven walls.

This coil is even, smooth, and has a round cross section. No problems!

Basic Tips for Success

How to attach clay to clay, and have it stay on.

1. Attach any clay handles/appendages/etc. when the clay is still wet (not stiff).
2. Attach clay of similar dampness (i.e. not wet clay with dry clay)
3. *Thoroughly* scratch both sides that are meant to be attached. See the image below. The left spot is NOT scratched enough. The middle spot is STILL NOT enough. The right spot is just right. Think of your clay like two rocks with a smooth face. You need to rough up the surface so they can lock together like Velcro or puzzle pieces.
4. Gently add clay slip so it does not smooth out your rough scratches. Firmly and thoroughly press together the parts being attached. Repeat with other parts.



Rule of Thumb: Use Your thumb!

1. Long skinny spikes/tentacles/appendages will easily break off.
2. If it sticks straight out, make it shorter than your thumb and just thick or thicker.
3. If it needs to be longer or thinner than your thumb, it should be scratched and slipped thoroughly, and it should wrap around the piece. See example:

