

Tools and Materials for Animal Sculpture

- Printed 360 degree photos of the type of animal you would like to make. If possible, try and find a photo that shows the gesture you would like to make as well. Some detail shots are also helpful for things like eyes or feet.
- Basic clay sculpture tools. I have attached images of some of my favorite specialty tools and preferred loop tool for hollowing. These can be found at most clay supply stores or online.
- Armatures can be useful for some solid built pieces. Check on the next pages to see if you need to bring armature supplies for your piece.
- A plain butter knife or tableware knife, a smaller sharp knife or fettling knife, wire cutter, needle tool, and or scoring tool.
- Brushes of various sizes. I use these for textures in wet clay and glazing. I prefer to use nylon brushes (gold or white Taklon) available at any craft store or online.
- A plywood ware board (3/4" thick, approx. 12"x 14") to work on depending on the size of your sculpture.
- Stoneware clay with grog (I prefer fine sandy grog and a mid-range clay body)



Nylon Brushes- variety pack



Small wire loop tools for details



Small wood tools for shaping



Large loop tool for Hollowing- [Kemper Tools KSP4](#)



[Wire tool for cutting](#)



R2



R3

Small loop tools (steel, not wire) for carving – [Kemper Tools R2 and R3](#), or variety pack



24 TEETH

[Small Sherril Mud tool serrated rib](#)

or



Standard pottery kit serrated rib



[Xiem Tools Scraper Tool XST10](#)



[MKM Pottery Tools](#), Various Rollers and Stamps



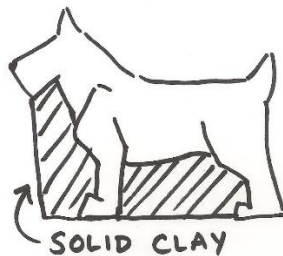
[Marvelous Molds](#), Silicone molds



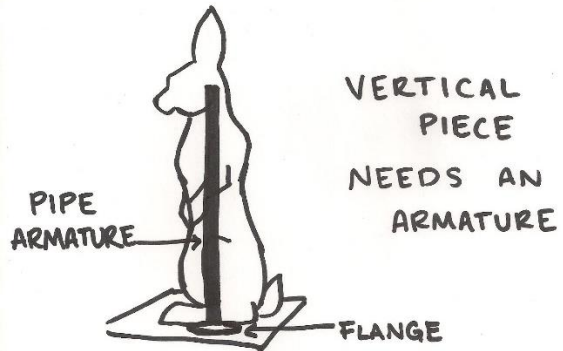
Custom Signature Writer stamps
and date stamps from www.4clay.com



[Xiem Tools Retractable Scoring Tool](#)



HORIZONTAL
PIECE
NO ARMATURE
NEEDED



Depending on the pose you choose for your animal, you may need an armature as illustrated above. Armature information is below if you would like to purchase these materials. If your piece is going to be larger than 12-14" you will need an armature no matter what pose it is in. I also suggest a sturdy plywood board $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick and at least 12"l x 12"w.

Armature Supplies:

These can be purchased at Home Depot/Lowe's

- (1) 8'-12" long, $\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter galvanized pipe
- (1) $\frac{1}{2}$ " flange for galvanized pipe
- Electrical tape
- $\frac{1}{2}$ " wood screws



Hollowing Process

Don't forget the piece must be leather hard to hold its shape when you hollow it out!



Usually, I cut the head off first at the neck or behind the eyes to avoid details. Hollow the head out and wrap up when finished.

For the body you can carve the block back until it is completely removed, then cut the body of the animal in half. Another option at this stage would be to put the wire tool underneath the whole sculpture and pull upwards in the center to cut it in half. Then lay the two sections on foam to remove the block and carve the insides of the legs.



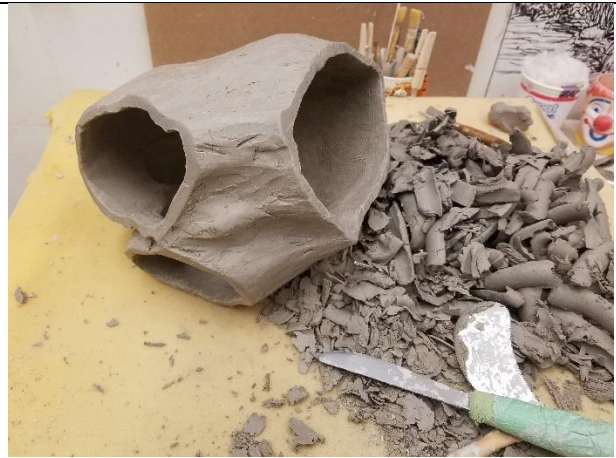
Registration marks across your cut help to line up sections after hollowing.



Cutting the piece like this helps keep the legs safe from breaking. If your animal's legs are skinny and fragile you should cut them off at these marks to wrap up while you hollow the body. Legs larger than 1" should also be cut off and hollowed out.



Draw a guideline for the wall thickness. Use a large loop tool to remove clay working from the center out evenly and consistently. As you get closer to the line, use smaller loop tools and a scraping motion rather than a gauge.



Use a butter knife and or a rib to compress the walls once you get close to the desired thickness. Make sure the walls are at an even thickness everywhere and well compressed for strength. You can scrape the last bit of weight out of pieces with a butter knife and get into tricky areas too!



You can keep all the clay you dig out and wet it down so you can reclaim and reuse it.



Make as many sections as you need for larger pieces. Wall thickness should be 3/8" thick and well compressed.



Sections should be slipped and scored on both sides and reattached. Reinforce attachments by scoring and slipping the seam and adding a coil.



Blend the coil down with a wood tool

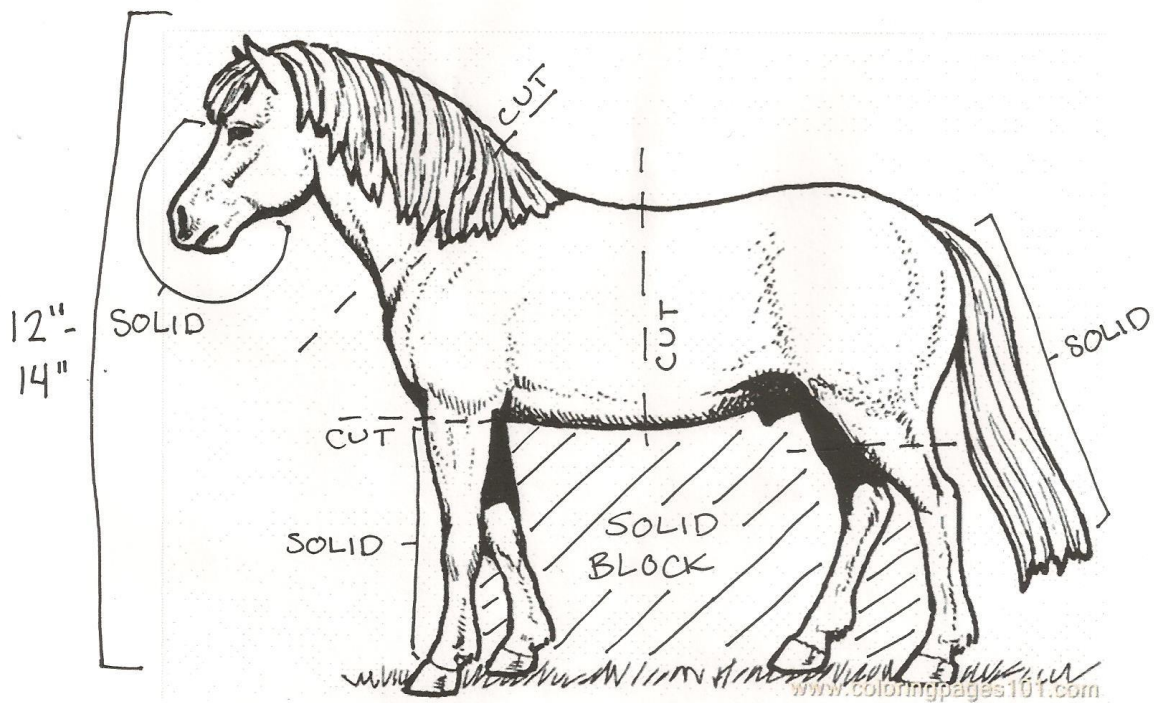


For larger pieces it is helpful to use a piece of foam to put the body upside down and re-attach the legs.



Once the legs/body are attached you can put the head back on, too. When the whole piece is re-assembled, I do details like ears, tails, tusks, horns, etc. It is best to leave final texturing until after hollowing as well.

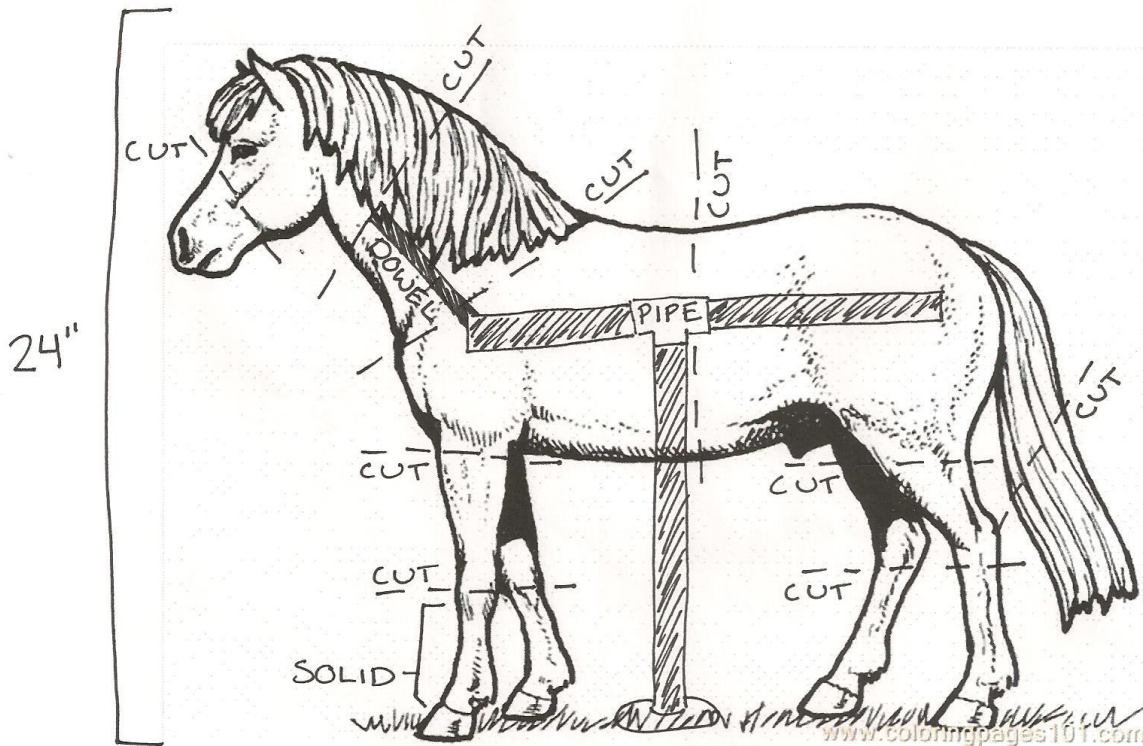
Hollowing Tips



Here is an idea of where you would cut a small animal sculpture (12-14 inches) for hollowing.

Notice more areas are left solid here. It is possible to leave places less than an inch thick solid if the piece will have plenty of time to dry. This might mean parts of the head, neck and legs are left solid, and the main mass of the body is hollowed out.

For small sculptures of animals with long, thin legs, make sure to wait until the legs and block are leather hard before carving away too much of the block. You can also turn this block into a belly firing support if the legs are thin. Making a base for your sculpture and attaching the animal can also help stabilize thin legs.



Here is where you might cut a larger piece for hollowing. This would be for sculptures about 18-24 inches in the longest dimension.

Notice the legs will have to be hollowed, but maybe not all the way down. Also notice that the head will have to be cut into at least two sections to hollow the nose completely.

A piece this size would require an armature to hold up the weight of the clay. A simple T joint and two smaller pipes are enough. Make sure they are centered in the mass of the body, not too high or too low. Dowels can be used to hold up the neck and head on pieces this size.

It may be wise to sculpt larger additions if they will be thick (like the tail above) in case they need hollowing out as well, but still leave things like ears and texture until the very end.

Firing Supports



Firing supports can be useful to support complex gestures during reassembly *and* firing. If you use the solid block method, you can even keep the block thicker in certain places to use it as a support. Remember to hollow support blocks as well, and poke holes in them to help them dry. To prevent sticking if the clay is more wet, you can use a layer of tissue or toilet paper between the figure and the support. You can make smaller supports if needed to hold raised feet or heads that stick out far from the body.

Pieces with small footprints and large bodies should have bases made that they are attached to later for stability. Most pieces will hold themselves up after they are bisque fired but will need firing support during reassembly and firing to keep legs from cracking or breaking.

I always reassemble sculptures on a piece of drywall just in case it cannot be picked up again, the whole drywall board can be loaded in the kiln and fired. It acts as a shrink slab would, moving with the clay and does not burn out completely, so it supports the sculpture throughout the firing. You can also use kiln posts or bricks in addition to firing supports for uneven or irregular pieces.

EXAMPLES:

