

4. (OPTIONAL) Now you have a flattened piece of dough, you can add texture.

- If using textured wallpaper, just place the paper face down on top of the dough and apply pressure to the back of the paper.
- Alternatively you can use found objects – anything with a texture (pine cones, leaves, flowers, shells, coins). Just use your imagination and experiment with different objects. If it doesn't look right, you can always start again by rolling out the dough.



5. Using the cookie cutters, cut shapes from your flattened dough.

Tip: Make sure you go right through the thickness of the dough, and give a little shake to help ease the dough away from the sides of the cutter. If you find that your cut shape has a rough edge, just rub a wet finger along the edge.



6. If you want your decorations to hang, for example on a Christmas tree, you will need to make a hole. To do so, get a plastic straw and push it through the dough, making sure not to go too close to the edge. If the dough gets stuck inside the straw, just blow it out, like a pea shooter.



7. Now the dough needs to be dried. The quickest way to do this is in a microwave - roughly three minutes. Find a flat plate to place the decorations on. Try to choose shapes that are roughly the same thickness as they will cook in the same time. Make sure you do not put anything metal in the microwave.

Tip: You may find that the dough is too sticky to get them off the table. If that is the case, try peeling away the excess dough from around your shape and/or using a spatula/fish slice to help lift it off.

Cook them on high for three minutes, making sure you check on them every 20 seconds or so. If you overcook them, they tend to bubble up. As everyone's dough will be mixed differently and microwaves have different levels of power, please keep an eye on your creations when they are cooking. Take them out to check their dryness – CAREFUL - THEY WILL BE HOT! If they still feel wet, put them back into the microwave for another few seconds. However, if you are not in a rush for them, you could leave them to air dry on a cooling rack in a warm place – but this can take days!

8. Once your decorations are dry you can either leave them as they are, or you can paint them. Don't forget to tie some ribbon or string through the holes so they can be hung up.



Variations:

- You can use this method to create hanging decorations for trees, or string them up like bunting. They can even be used as gift tags.
- You might want to think about a theme – Christmas, Valentine's, nature and so on.
- Why not try making a batch of fragrant dough by adding some spices or essential oils?

Progression: you could progress to using salt dough to make simple decorated pots, bowls, cups etc. Pinch pots are a simple form of hand made pottery, made from ancient times to now.



© Christine Hilditch

Salt dough



This activity enables participants to make some salt dough decorations that they have created themselves. It can be done in groups or as a one-to-one activity. It's a great hands-on, craft activity for people to get involved in.

Ingredients

- Mixing bowl
- Cup for measuring
- Plain flour
- Salt
- Lukewarm water
- Variety of different shaped cookie cutters
- Objects for pressing in the dough/off cuts of textured wallpaper
- Straws
- Spatula
- String/ribbon for hanging
- Access to microwave
- A cooling tray can be useful
- Paint to decorate
- Small paint brushes
- The room needs to be bright with easy access to tables and chairs
- To keep everyone clean: wipeable table cover/ greaseproof paper taped to the table, aprons.



Method

Before any art session it is always best to have some finished artwork so participants have an idea of what to aim towards.

Make sure that all participants are as involved as they are able to be in the process, from mixing the dough to painting the decorations.

1. To make the dough:

- Measure out ½ cup of salt and 1 cup of plain flour into a mixing bowl. Slowly add 1 cup of water mixing as you go (you may not need all of the water).
- You are looking for a dough that doesn't stick to your fingers. If you feel the dough is too dry add some more water. If you feel the dough is too sticky, add more flour. It is easier and more fun to mix with your hands so that you can knead the dough.



- This dough is non-toxic but will taste horrid if accidentally eaten so please remember to remind your participants that this is an art activity and you are not baking bread, although feel free to chat about things they used to like doing, like baking.



2. Once the dough has a consistency you are happy with, divide it up between your participants.

The amount of dough each participant works with will of course depend on how many participants you have and the size of your cup measures. You



may find that making up a few bowls of dough for a group might be better.

Tip: excess dough can be put in an airtight container and placed in the fridge for about a week. Just take it out in advance so it reaches room temperature before using it.

3. Flatten each piece of dough with your hands on the table cover.

Tip: Your participants will probably produce decorations of various thicknesses. Just keep in mind that the thicker the piece is, the longer it will take to dry. Also note that the thinner it is, the more likely it is to dry. An ideal thickness is around 0.5cm (and it will probably get thicker when drying in the microwave).

