# Exploring with Clay

The purpose of this activity is for educators to engage in the arts using clay to explore and represent science ideas.

## Key Concepts

- Working with clay to create a representation or model
- Characteristics of insects
- Characteristics and changes in materials

## Materials and Setup

- Modeling clay
- Clay sculpting tools, like rollers, molds, and trimming tools

10–15 minutes

Individually

In-person or virtual professional learning

**Note:** This activity can be adapted to use other materials, such as recycled materials to create a collage; watercolors to paint; or colored pencils, crayons, or pastels to draw. If the session takes place virtually:

- faciltators can adjust the materials to ones participants might have available in their own settings and advise participants to come to the virtual session with the necessary materials.
- participants can be divided into breakout rooms in Zoom or another online platform to discuss the reflection questions.

## Activity Instructions

- Use the clay and tools to create a sculpture to represent an insect of your choosing:
  - You might choose to make a butterfly, ant, beetle, or any insect you are familiar with from your community or growing up.
- Think about the parts of this insect and how you can represent them in a sculpture. Then start working with the clay and tools available to create this representation.
- As you build, notice the ways you are changing the clay by squeezing, rolling, joining pieces, or using tools to create texture. Experiment intentionally with different techniques.

## Reflect and Discuss

Once you are finished with your sculpture, share it with a partner and discuss:

- What insect characteristics and details did you represent?
- What did you notice about the clay as you worked to shape it?

## Child Activities

This activity can also be modified to be done with children in your learning setting. You can support children to engage in this activity by reading books about insects, introducing visuals and vocabulary related to the characteristics of insects, and using materials and art forms that children are familiar with to construct their insect.

The following Count Play Explore (CPE) book guide and related activity offer ideas on how you might adapt this activity for children:

- *Pattern Bugs* by Trudy Harris (ages 3–6), related activity: Colorful Insects

For more books and activities that can support children's STEAM learning through the arts, explore the CPE website (countplayexplore.org):

- *Color Zoo* by Lois Ehlert (ages 1–5), related activity: Giant Animal Faces
- *Hannah's Collections* by Marthe Jocelyn (ages 2–6), related activity: Collection Collage
- *I Love All of Me* by Lorie Ann Grover (ages infant to 3), related activity: Butterfly Prints
- *Michael Recycle* by Ellie Bethel (ages 4–8), related activity: Trash to Treasure
- *Perfect Square* by Michael Hall (ages 3–9), related activity: Perfect Polygons
- *Stack the Cats* by Susie Ghahremani (ages 2–5), related activity: Cat Stack
- *Tap the Magic Tree* by Christie Matheson (ages 2–5), related activity: Tree Sculptures

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