How to make a modeling clay turtle

Materials: Soft non-drying modeling clay in two colors, a board. Eyes optional.



1. Prepare the balls

Knead each color separately. Roll one large brown ball for the shell. Make four equal green balls for the feet, one slightly larger green ball for the head and a small green ball for the tail.

Check: The four foot balls look similar in size; head and tail pieces are separate.

Fix: Compare the balls side by side. Move a little clay from a larger one to a smaller one and roll both again. Soften firm clay with your hands.



2. Shape a low shell

Set the large ball on the board and press lightly with your palm. Gently lengthen it into a thick oval dome with a flat underside. Do not flatten it into a thin pancake.

Check: The top is rounded, the bottom flat; it is noticeably thicker than the feet will be.

Fix: If the shell is too thin, knead it back into a ball and press less. Lower an overly tall dome gently with your palm.



3. Flatten four equal feet

Press each of the four equal green balls lightly onto the board and lengthen it into a thick oval paddle. Use the same short gentle pressure. Set all feet together to compare them.

Check: There are four feet of similar length and thickness, with intact edges and no thin ribbons.

Fix: Roll a thin foot again and press less. Gently gather a longer foot toward its middle and smooth the edge.

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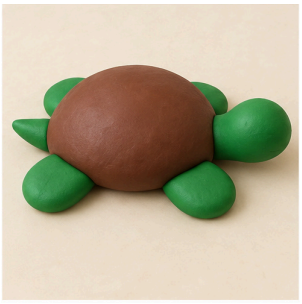


4. Attach feet to the shell underside

Turn the shell flat-side up, supporting its dome in your palm. Flatten the inner end of a foot into a broad tab. Overlap about one third of the foot onto the shell underside; the rest sticks out. Press the tab into the brown clay with a finger and smooth its edge toward the shell. Attach two feet on each side, then turn the model upright.

Check: Hold the shell and gently touch each foot: its base does not peel away. All four feet rest evenly on the board.

Fix: Remove a loose foot and knead its base and the joining patch on the shell. Widen the tab, overlap underneath again, press and smooth its edge.



5. Add a short head and tail

Shape the larger green ball into a short thick oval head. Narrow one end slightly and press it beneath the front shell edge, leaving the rounded head outside. Shape the small piece into a short thick pointed tail and attach it at the rear.

Check: Head and tail point in opposite directions, their bases are joined and the head rests on the board.

Fix: If the head falls off, shorten the neck and widen its base. Knead a thin tail again and make it shorter and thicker.



6. Add eyes and check the joins

If you like, press two tiny black clay dots onto the head. Keep the shell plain. Carefully move the turtle, supporting it underneath with your palm, then set it back on the board.

Check: All four feet are attached, the head and tail stay in place and the turtle does not rock.

Fix: If a piece stays on the board, return to its join and widen the contact. Remove the eyes if needed: the shape still reads as a turtle.

Try independently: Make a second turtle without the step pictures: choose different colors and a slightly wider shell. Decide how far its feet should stick out. Check both models after moving them and explain why a broad overlap holds better than touching tips.