

# EZ-Grout Mosaics

All ages can mimic mosaic artisans throughout history with these easy tile-making and “grouting” techniques. Handmade tiles are formed from air-dry clay, glued to a firm backing, then “grouted” with Blickrylic paint giving a colorful, recessed dimensional look to the artwork. The resulting decorative piece of 2D art can be simple enough for younger students and those with special needs or may be more intricately designed by advanced students. The uneven thickness and edges of the final piece add distinctive charm to this project.

## Grade Levels K-12

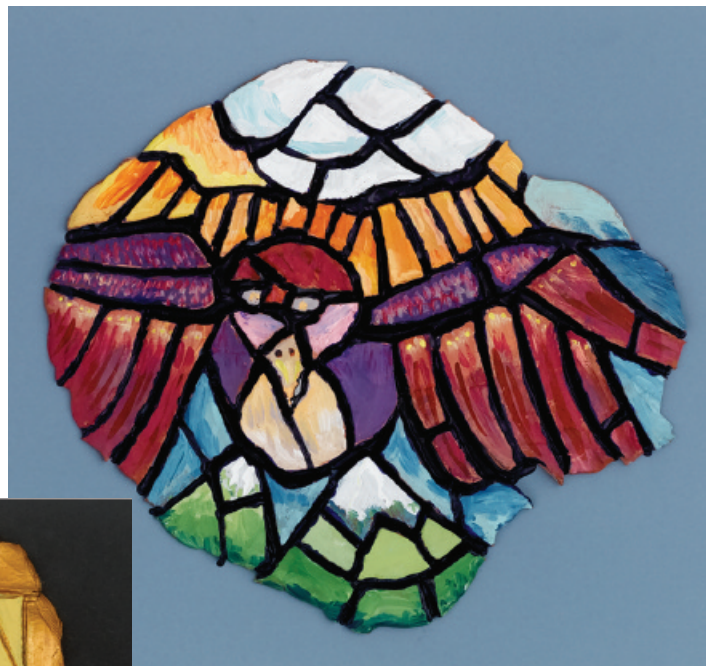
*Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.*

## Preparation

1. Discuss and view examples of mosaic art from history and contemporary artists. Recommended resources:  
[The Mosaic Artist's Handbook](#) (69950-1001)  
[The Encyclopedia of Mosaic Techniques](#) (71681-1001)
2. Prepare sketches of tile designs to be cut from clay. Consider both realistic and abstract approaches. For best results, keep the subject simple without too many pieces or “tiles”.
3. Cut air-dry clay into slabs approximately 1 to 1-1/4 lbs each, need one slab per student
4. Give each student one sheet of canvas as a working and drying space for the clay. Tape the canvas to the desk or table close to the student.
5. Cut foamboard into pieces approximately 10" x 15". Need one piece per student.

## Process

1. Working on the canvas sheet, flatten clay slab with a rolling pin to about 1/4" thickness. The edges may be thinner and more random.
2. Lightly draw a design onto the clay using a sharp pencil. Students can rub out mistakes with fingers. Once design is drawn on the clay, trace the lines with a fettling knife, using enough pressure to cut through the clay all the way to the canvas sheet.



## Materials

[Amaco® Self-Hardening Mexican Red Clay](#) (33205-3025); share one 25-lb bag across class

[Non-Stick Rolling Pins](#), 12" (30345-0000); share two share across class

[Blick® Studio Canvas 10-Sheet Pads](#), 12" x 16" (07400-1046); share three across class

[3M® Tartan™ Masking Tape](#), 1.41" x 60-yd roll, (24113-1141); share two across class

[Kemper® Fettling Knives](#), (30349-1010); share four across class

[Dynasty® Ruby Synthetic Brush Canister](#), asst. of 72 (05198-0729); share one set across class

[Blickrylic® Student Acrylics](#), asst. colors, (00711- ); share 4-8 pints across class

[Plastic Squeeze Bottles](#), 4-oz (04916-1004); need one per student

[Bienfang® Foamboard](#), asst. colors, 20" x 30", (13205-); share seven sheets across class

[3M® Production Sandpaper](#), fine grit (34916-1303); share one 10-sheet pkg across class

## Process, continued

3. Allow clay tiles to fully dry and “cure” for several days so they will be less likely to break. As a precaution against curling or warping, cover tiles with a piece of wax paper then weight with a book until dry.
4. When the tiles are fully dry, gently move them from the canvas to a clean piece of inexpensive paper or wax paper. Keep them in order so they can easily be reassembled. Remove any burrs or clay nubs from tile edges with a piece of fine-grit sandpaper. Wipe with a dry tissue to remove dust from the clay.
5. Paint the tiles with Blickrylic colors. The color could be extended from one tile to another like a painting or each piece could be individually painted. Allow to dry.
6. Arrange the tile design onto the foamboard background. Set each piece approximately 1/4” apart then glue in place one at a time.
7. Pour Blickrylic colors into squeeze bottles, filling each about 1/2 full. Carefully squeeze the acrylic onto the foamboard between the tiles. Note: the thick acrylic will look like it fills the space but will shrink as it dries, giving a recessed look. If a full grouted space is desired, apply a layer of white glue first then apply Blickrylic over the glue.

## Options

1. When positioning clay tiles, they can extend off the foamboard in areas. This is a great look but it also makes tiles more fragile.
2. Kiln-fire clay and glazes can be substituted for air-dry clay and paint. Glazed and fired tiles can then be glued and “grouted” as described above.
3. Add texture to the wet tiles with clay tools. Acrylic paint may be thinned with a little water to allow the color to fill the textured areas.



## National Standards

Content Standard #1 Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

**K-4** Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories

**5-8** Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

**9-12** Students apply media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks

Content Standard #2 Using knowledge of structures and functions

**K-4** Students describe how different expressive features and organizational principles cause different responses

**5-8** Students generalize about the effects of visual structures and functions and reflect upon these effects in their own work

**9-12** Students evaluate the effectiveness of artworks in terms of organizational structures and functions