

# Kudzu's Whimsy - Dragons



*by Sally Golubosky*

I am a self taught sculptor who primarily creates dragons. On occasion I stray outside my comfort zone but I run back quickly. After all, you can never have too many dragons!

Visit my blog  
<http://kudzuswhimzy.blogspot.com>

or  
<http://www.polyclayplay.com/Free>  
to see all my tutorials.

Coming Soon... You can take a class of mine at  
Poly Clay Play Adventures - Polymer Clay Playing Classes

# Tools Used to “Birth” My Dragons

## A Note on Tools

Before I get down to the nitty-gritty of just how one of these creatures is “born” I thought I would talk about tools for a minute. The photo shows exactly what I use to make a small dragon, no more... no less.

Pretty easy.

I use plain old Super Sculpey for 95% of my sculpts and then paint them with acrylic paints. You can use whatever you want. This list is just to let you see what I use. There is no right or wrong in any case.



1. Two needle tools, one is thin like a sewing needle and the other is larger. The larger one is made by Amaco and you can find the little one at [www.PolyClayPlay.com](http://www.PolyClayPlay.com)
2. Craft Knife
3. Translucent Liquid Sculpey - TLS
4. Small Paint Brushes - I use the paint brushes for multiple uses. The round end is great for smoothing and joining legs/arms to the body. The bristle end I use for smoothing and applying TLS. OH! Plus the round end makes a great texture tool!

5. Speaking of texture tools.... See those super attractive ...ha ha... little nubs of twisted clay laying and standing near the box? Those are my super important texture tools. You can use anything your heart desires to make a texture tool. The purple one has some beads that are simple leaf shapes, great scales when you mash it into the clay over and over in a pattern. The red one has seed beads mashed into it. The “o” pattern the seed beads make adds great detail, especially on sea dragons or fish. My favorite is the orange one that is laying down. I used it and the round end of a paint brush to texture Eco. That one contains tiny gravel. I put a thin layer of TLS on my clay nub and then gently mashed in the tiny pieces of gravel. Then the nub is baked for the appropriate time (same way beaded ones were made). The last all important texture tool is the flesh colored one... my signature stamp. That one is a very simple stamp I made from a thin rolled snake that was shaped into my initials... SRG. Hint, hint make sure you apply the letters reversed! First time I made one I wasn't thinking and was all happy, happy then realized, ooops! I ended up with a reversed stamp.

6. Wire
7. Beads for Eyes (6mm hematite for Baby Griffin)
8. Wire Snips
9. Needle Nose Pliers
10. Last but not pictured... Toothpicks!
11. I work on a ceramic tile which is sitting on a Lazy Susan... Nice and easy to get to all sides without having to pick that bad boy up all the time, and let me tell you, sometimes those dragons get rather unruly while you are working on them! Picking them up over and over makes them want to move their necks and tails all over... Especially right after you finally get it where you want it! When working on LARGE dragons it isn't as much of a problem because they are built over a solid foil and wire armature. OK, I've rambled enough. Don't worry, it's pretty simple. So warm your hands up and get ready to roll, roll and shape some clay.
12. For the Baby Griffin: Makin's Leaf Cutter (set of three) available at [PolyClayPlay.com](http://PolyClayPlay.com) (optional)
13. Makin's “fur” tool. See step 30. (optional)
14. Marabou Feathers (optional)

# How to Hatch a Baby Griffin



2. All that clay hanging off his now refined back side needs a bit of a nip and tuck. Roll it out and create the thickness and length you think is appropriate for his tail. Now a nip and roll will do it. Roll the

end to make it smooth and we have a tail!

3. Tweak, tweak!

Time for a beak! I rounded his head a bit more with the crook between my thumb and index finger. He



is starting to have a bird head. Grab hold of some clay on the front of the head and give a pinch. You will want to pinch in both directions: up and down (shown) and across.

I'm back again with a new critter for everyone to make and play with. Up front I'm going to tell you, the finished fellow in this tutorial is going to be slightly different than the two supervisors above. We are going for a mixed media sculpt. It takes most of two sheets of Super Sculpey to form the head, body and tail. Let's go!



1. We are going to start with a chunky log. Pinch one end and begin forming a ball shape. This will become his head. Roll the clay below the ball to form a neck. Lift this section

up so he can look around, we know he can't see yet

but we can pretend. For the other end; pull and roll to start forming a tail. For now it will be rough and too big but that is OK. See his big ole butt sticking up? In order for



him to get that way take a finger or tool of your choice and rock it back and forth between the shoulder and hip area. Soften the curves out and shape his front and back to make them round and smooth.



Soften the curves out and shape his front and back to make them round and smooth.



Use your craft knife to slice his little beak open. Squawk! Feed me! OK, back to business. Smooth the

4. Use the back end of a brush or tool of your choice and roll under the lower beak. This will create a lower jaw line.



edges of the upper and lower beak. Pinch the end of the upper beak in both directions, again giving it a refined look. Close his mouth and use the larger needle tool to make a dot finishing the ends of the beak.

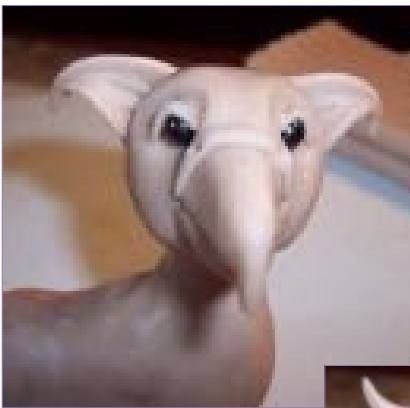
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5. Roll out a small snake that will become his nostrils. Make sure it is tapered at both ends. Attach the snake on the back of the upper beak. Use the little needle tool and create nostrils. I insert and pull down to create a teardrop shape.



6. Here come some beady black eyes... Push the back end of the needle tool into the head softly to create eye sockets. Wire the 6mm hematite beads to secure them in his head. Once the beads are wired figure your placement, roughly even with the nostrils, and insert them. Yea! Now he can speak, breathe and see!



7. The ears are cut with the leaf cutter. I use this cutter quite a bit. It is supposed to be a leaf but I use the smooth side for ears. If you don't have one, free hand a couple teardrop



shaped pieces in a size you like. The clay used was rolled out on a #1 setting on the pasta machine. (thickest setting)

8. Gently roll the outer edges in towards the center of the ear. Mark 2 or 3 crease lines from the inner ear towards the outer ear. Flatten the inner edge and attach to the back of his head. It looks nice if you have a line... nostril, eye, and ear. The ears can be put in many positions to change his expression. This



little guy is going with the up ears. As soon as I turned them up I thought he looked wind blown... meet Stormy!

9. For a nice detail create a little indentation between the eyes to create a more defined brow line and add expression.

10. Logs, teardrops and pinching again. The first picture shows the shape we are looking for in a leg log. It is not quite as long as the brush and flattened some with an oval shape at the end. This will make the thighs. Cut the log in half. Use the picture of the leg against the body as a guide for how to shape his back leg. It is done the same as the basic dragon's legs.



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11. To form the foot cut off the excess clay and round off the end of the foot. Use the small needle tool and mark

in three toe lines. That will make four toes. Smooth the toes out to make them rounded like cute little



piggies should be. To finish the toes/foot, use the larger needle tool to create an indentation behind the toes. This makes the toes stand out a bit and adds some

plumpness to the foot. Remember, he's a baby plump is cute!



12. This is what the finished legs look like. Don't forget those important tabs on the bottom of the thigh. They really do help secure the joining of the limbs. Brush a little TLS on the inside

of the thighs and then press on to the body. Flip him over and smooth the tabs into the underside. If you would like paw pads on the bottoms of his feet you can add those to.



13. Logs, logs. I'm starting to think my method should be called the Log, Pinch and Roll Method! So with that said make another log, long and thin this

time. You want the log to be a little thinner than your thumb. Now cut it into two sections, each about 3" long.



14. Let's get technical... smooch the clay down on your work surface and start forming a triangular shape at the end of the

foot. Ooooh, triangles! Finally got away from those teardrops!



15. Cut the front section of the foot into three sections. Roll each of the toes out into nice long toes. Now cut them off! No, not the whole

thing but trim down so they are proportionate to the foot. Round the ends off and smooch them back a bit to plump them up.



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16. Lay the front leg against the body and cut off at the proper length.

17. Round off the end of the leg and create a tapered slope where it will attach to the body. Use the small needle tool to add texture to the foot and leg.

18. Put a dab of TLS on the top back of the leg before



attaching. Now lightly press onto body and smooth top. Pose his legs into a pleasing position. Stormy is going to have his foot propped on something.



19. Stormy isn't going to be covered with clay feathers. If you would prefer to cover your guy with clay roll out a sheet of clay on the pasta machines thickest setting.

20. Cut little squares 1/2" long by 1/4" wide or somewhere around there. Doesn't need to be exact!

21. Now form each square into a little feather shape and use the needle tool to apply the line work.

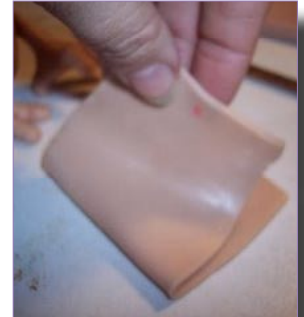


22. Use a bit of TLS and apply the feathers in rows starting at the lowest point and working up. Even though you are working in rows try not to make it look like ROWS. You do want a bit of a

random look to it, not a pattern.

23. Roll out a sheet of clay on the pasta machine's thickest setting. Double the clay over lightly and cut out a wing shape.

24. Smooth the edges and slightly roll over the top edges to add some interest and curve.



25. Cut two pieces of wire about 1". I believe mine is 20 gauge. Fold the wire over in half and

pinch the ends together with needle nose pliers.

26. Put a dot of TLS on the inner edge of the wing and lightly mash the wire into the TLS.

27. Take a small dot of clay and cover the ends of the wire. Smooth clay in seamlessly.

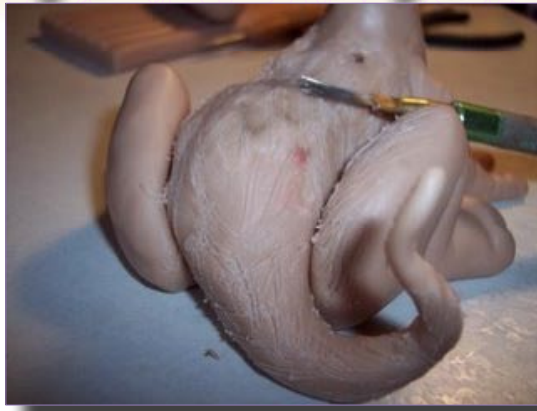


28. Repeat for other wing.

29. Now poke holes in the griffins back and test how the wings will sit. If they need to be trimmed or repositioned, now is the time to do it.



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## Finishing

I wanted to show how to finish the little griffin. Unfortunately I'm having tech problems again! This time with my wonderful, clear my throat, 17 year old son. He took the memory card out of my camera, wiped it, put it in his camera and I now have tons of skate videos and pics. As great as they are they aren't going to help anyone finish a griffin!! So, here goes the short and sweet of it with no pictures. (Hey, you're all creative people I know you will get how to do it.)

30. The fur tool (as I call it) that I am using in the first picture is made by Makin's Clay. It is a wire brush attachment. You can find them at PolyClayPlay.com. Look under Makin's Tool Sets in the Alphabetical Product listing.
31. If you don't have one, you can easily make a fur tool. I also use the ones I have made. These are made by cutting lengths of wire and inserting them into a clay handle, bake tool and use! Brush your fur tool over the body to create a fur like texture. Don't brush his front legs or head.

34. Paint him with washes just like the dragon.
35. Dry brush two to three colors working from darkest to light.
36. On browns I normally dry brush with a cream or white last.
37. Apply sealer. You can use Marabou Feathers if you didn't make clay feathers. That is what I did with little Stormy.



32. Take a good look at him and make sure he is to your liking. Don't worry about little clay tufts or rough spots. These can be lightly sanded off after baking.
33. If you are happy with him, he is ready for the sauna! Bake him at the correct temperature and time for your clay. I bake at 275 degrees for about an hour. The wings only bake for about 20 minutes. Oh, a note on the wings... if you are using clay feathers don't forget to add some to the wings!! Off to the sauna...

# Propping and Baking

A question was brought to my attention about something seen but not mentioned in the dragon tutorial...paper towel wads.

When sculpting one of these long necked and long tailed creatures, it is a good idea to use little wads of tissue, poly-fil, paper towel or rolled up card stock to prop areas as you work.

If you want that tail or a foot raised up it isn't just going to stay there because you want it to. Look at the green dragon in group photo. He has a foot and tail up in the air

While sculpting, it might hold that lovely pose but once that critter goes in the sauna, there is a good chance it will fall and or break off.

For anyone not familiar with the workings of polymer clay, it gets super soft before it gets hard.

While baking the piece, the heat does what magic it needs to do for the clay to set up and become nice and hard when cool. However, while it is hot, it is super, super soft and without proper "prop", raised and heavy pieces may break off.

I have lost a head or two due to negligent propping. So, take an extra minute and give him some good support under the chin or anywhere a tail is raised or a foot is lifted.

A dragon sitting up on his back legs is a whole 'nother tutorial. Then we get into weighing and all kinds of crazy stuff! So for now, let's just remember little wads of paper towel are our friends!