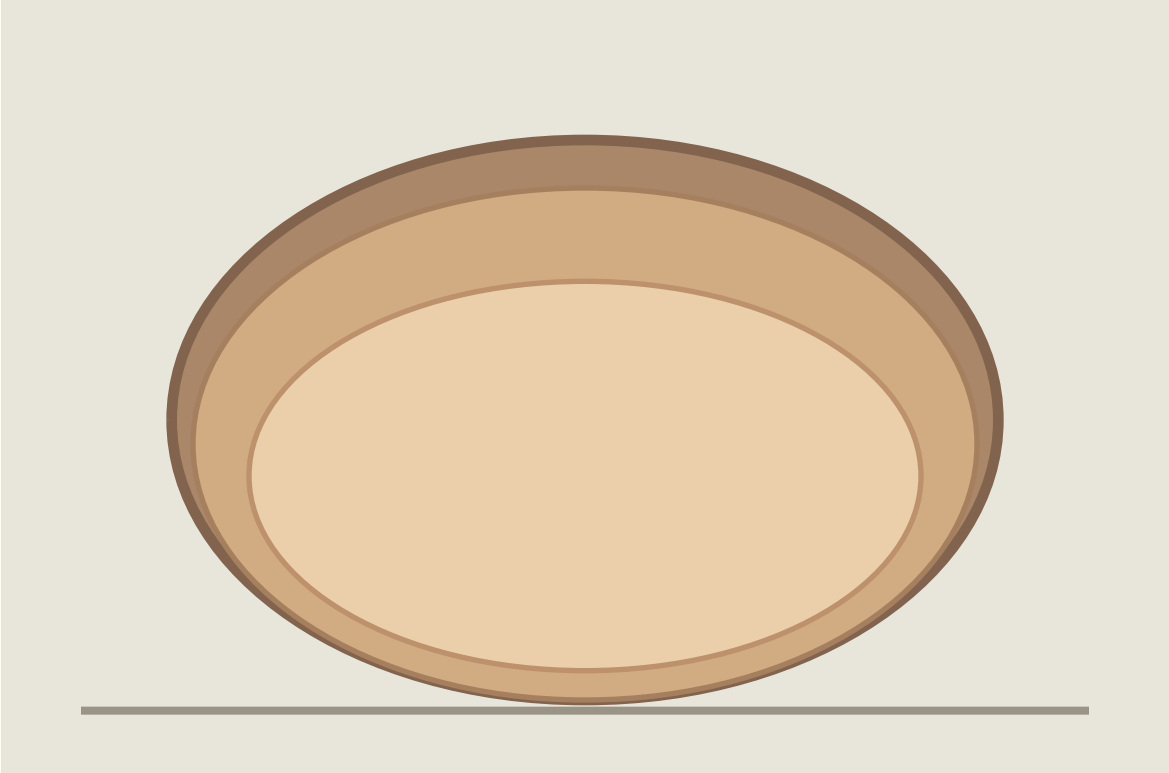
STEADLEAF PRESS

MAKE / ORIGINAL FREE DIGITAL GUIDE / F098

SHAPE A SMALL CLAY TRINKET TRAY

A one-piece oval with a gently raised rim



ONE-PIECE OVAL / THICKNESS PLANNING

Original shaping, side-profile and drying records.

Digital illustration only. Not a food-safe or tested vessel.

Edition: Original Steadleaf Press FREE MAKE adult digital guide. Independent technical/editorial review final verdict PASS; no actual physical clay, thickness, crack, load or food safety testing. No physical clay, shaping, drying, crack, print-scale, food-contact, load, coating, safety or material testing has been performed by Steadleaf Press.

A tiny decorative dish, not a kitchen dish

Use a single small portion of manufacturer-labelled air-dry clay to shape a one-piece, shallow oval trinket tray. Make the broad floor first, then raise a gentle rim from the same piece of clay. Do not glue on a separate coil, drape clay tightly over a rigid bowl, create sharp corners, or carve a deep cavity that makes the base unexpectedly thin. Your learning outcome is a shape and thickness planning card and a dried-surface observation log-not a guaranteed usable vessel.

This example is deliberately conservative: a suggested outside oval footprint of roughly 10 cm long by 8 cm wide, a wide, shallow interior, a base planned about 8-10 mm thick, a softly rounded rim approximately 8-10 mm thick, and a rim rise about 1-1.5 cm. Treat all measurements as illustrative targets for soft clay, not precision mould dimensions or verified dried results. Manufacturer advice about minimum thickness, maximum thickness, shape support and drying always takes priority. As one specific example, Crayola’s air-dry clay guidance says its work should not be thinner than 1/4 inch (~6 mm); that is advice for that manufacturer’s product and not a universal rule for all clays. Your actual clay may need a thicker construction, smaller span or different method.

The intended surface is a dry, indoor decorative tray for very lightweight small nonfood items, but there is no physical capacity, fall, stain, abrasion or weight test behind this digital lesson. Do not plan it for keys that may chip the rim, soap, water, jewellery with sharp edges, candles, incense, ashes, food, liquids or outdoor use. Air-dry clay is generally not equivalent to kiln-fired waterproof tableware; a varnish, if used separately according to the clay maker, does not automatically make it waterproof or food-safe.

Original dimensions guide: plan a rounded oval

Draw a working paper diagram with an outer oval 10 x 8 cm and a smaller inner oval about 8 x 6 cm. This leaves a nominal 1 cm plan-view rim band at the widest ends and sides. The plan-view rim width is a horizontal footprint, not the clay’s vertical wall thickness; distinguish the two. Include a side profile with a shallow floor planned 8-10 mm and an upturned rounded wall around 8-10 mm of material, rising roughly 1-1.5 cm above the centre floor. These values show what to aim for while shaping, not an actual required product spec or calibrated drawing.

Part | Illustrative target | How to observe it

Outer footprint | Oval about 10 x 8 cm | Compare gently from above to a separately ruled paper guide

Inner shallow area | About 8 x 6 cm | Keep a central flat zone, not a deep hole

Floor thickness | Plan about 8-10 mm | Monitor while pressing the soft clay; do not pierce the base to measure

Rounded rim thickness | About 8-10 mm | Compare gently at the accessible edge; no thin flange

Rim rise | About 1-1.5 cm | View from the side; avoid sharp angles and exaggerated height

The drawing itself is NOT a to-scale template: printer settings can stretch a PDF. If using any written dimensions, draw them fresh with a physical ruler and check the actual clay on the table. Do not use a metal blade or pointed probe to verify the finished floor thickness. With a small low tray, thickness and support matter more than matching the oval exactly.

Materials and handling limits

Prepare one package of still-soft, properly stored, clearly labelled air-dry craft clay, roughly a palm-sized single portion; the exact mass depends on formula, density and your desired footprint, so no universal number of grams is promised. Use a clean dedicated craft board that is nonstick according to the maker's instructions, a sheet of ordinary paper for the dry dimension sketch, a physical ruler, a soft rounded plastic or wooden craft shaping tool (not sharp), a clean smooth craft mat, a damp-not-wet sponge only if the maker permits light moisture, and a cloth for cleanup. Keep tools away from food preparation. If you use a reusable craft-only protective lining, follow the material maker's compatibility advice, and do not trap the clay around a hard mould while it shrinks.

Keep small children and pets away from clay pieces and scraps; avoid skin/dust exposures flagged by the manufacturer. Wash hands and use a damp wipe for dried residue rather than dry-sanding, sweeping or blowing particles. Avoid pouring clay sediment into household drains. No powered tools, oven, kiln, microwave, hair dryer, direct fan blast, radiator or direct hot sun. The project is made and dried at normal maker-appropriate room conditions.

Follow the actual package's full drying schedule. Crayola says that its own air-dry clay commonly becomes touch-dry around 24 hours and thoroughly dry around 72 hours, but thickness and environment change that. Those brand-specific example numbers are NOT a timetable for your different formulation. Do not paint, varnish, bend, drop or load the tray while drying. Even after full drying, no handling or weight capacity has been established by this guide.

Understand the one-piece shaping path

Pattern A - form the supported floor

Knead a small suitable portion gently according to the maker's guidance, stopping if it becomes sticky, crumbly or too soft to hold a form. Pat it into a thick rounded oval blank on the protective mat, not a thin cut-out

sheet. Flatten the central zone gradually with fingertips or a blunt rounded tool, keeping the centre floor substantially thick; no puncturing or gouging. Gently compare the outside footprint against the separately drawn 10 x 8 cm paper oval without pressing paper into the wet clay. Rotate the soft piece and look for an uneven, wafer-thin edge. If it is becoming thin, return some clay from a thicker area toward that edge while the clay remains soft, or restart with a smaller footprint rather than stretching a weak edge.

Pattern B - pinch a low continuous lip from the same piece

Starting at one end of the oval, raise the outermost approximately 1 cm footprint band little by little using the pads of fingers and a rounded tool. Work around the perimeter in several gentle passes, supporting the base with the other hand or board and avoiding a sharp fold at the junction. Do not pinch one spot tall while leaving its neighbours thin. Round the upper edge and smooth changes in curvature without adding extra coils. Check that the rim is not visibly thinner than the manufacturer’s minimum and the base has not been hollowed; use the approximate 8-10 mm planned dimensions only if appropriate for your clay. The rim can vary slightly in height-that is preferable to a cracked, rigidly forced shape.

Pattern C - mark the result, then dry it alone

On a dry maker record, note outside length and width, a cautious estimate of floor and rim thickness made during shaping, approximate rim rise, cracks or fold lines in wet clay, and the manufacturer’s directions. Transfer the tray only if the maker’s process allows moving this soft object safely; otherwise form it directly on a suitable drying board that can remain undisturbed. Dry it with support under its base, not clamped tightly around a rigid bowl. Do not use heat or a forced breeze. After the maker’s full drying period, inspect top, edge and underside only if the piece can be safely turned without stressing it. Record any visible split, curling or sagging; don’t hide damage by calling it successful.

Step-by-step instructions

1. Read the specific air-dry-clay label

Choose known manufacturer-labelled air-dry craft clay that is still workable. Read safety, thickness, permitted moisture and drying guidance. Do NOT substitute polymer clay, firing-only pottery clay or material without directions. The maker’s rules override the sample dimensions in this guide.

2. Set up a dedicated protective work surface

Choose a clean, low, stable craft board and nonstick material permitted by the clay maker. Put a paper template, physical ruler and blunt plastic shaping tool nearby. Keep food, children, pets, flames, fans and heaters away. Be ready to damp-clean rather than dry-sand dust.

3. Draw an outer and inner oval on dry paper

Using a real ruler, sketch an outer 10 x 8 cm oval and a smaller inner about 8 x 6 cm oval as a guidance card. Write "1 cm approximate plan-view border" at its broadest edges, and note that this does not equal actual wall thickness. This drawing is a size comparison, NOT a rigid mould or printable full-scale pattern.

4. Add a thickness and side-profile key

Next to the top-view ovals, draw a cross-section of a shallow tray: planned base roughly 8-10 mm thick, a gently rising rim around 8-10 mm thick, and an approximate rise 1-1.5 cm above the interior floor. Mark any maker minimum thickness that differs. The wet clay’s real dimensions will vary; don’t force the drawing onto the material.

5. Prepare one workable clay portion

Take one palm-sized piece from its package. Gently knead as the maker recommends until smooth and pliable enough for shaping. Cover unused clay. If the portion is bone-dry, crumbling badly, unusually sticky or incompatible with your intended thickness, STOP and replace it rather than soaking or heating it.

6. Form a thick softly rounded oval blank

Rest the clay on the protected board. Pat and shape it into a squat oval blank, rotating it so the material spreads fairly evenly instead of forming a thin tongue. Avoid deep cuts, sharp tools or pressing the clay over a rigid raised mould. Use the sketch as a rough reference without treating it as a required exact outline.

7. Build a broad shallow central floor

With fingertip pads or a blunt rounded tool, gradually depress the centre, leaving a reasonably broad, supported floor. Watch thickness while the clay remains soft. Do not puncture the centre or push it down to a paper-thin membrane. If too much clay gathers on one side, redistribute gently or make a smaller tray rather than stretching weak areas.

8. Lift the rim in gentle passes

Working around the whole oval, lift the outer edge slightly into a continuous low lip using gentle finger pinches, keeping the base supported by the board. Go around in several circuits instead of forcing one high wall in one spot. The inner edge should curve smoothly into the base rather than make a tight 90-degree hinge.

9. Compare thickness and correct weak spots

Recheck the accessible rim by eye and gentle fingertip reference; the chosen clay's label minimum thickness takes precedence over the illustrative 8-10 mm target. Use the physical ruler for outside span or rim rise, not a needle through the base. If the rim has a thin flange, blend it gently inward while still soft or redesign smaller; do not reinforce with an untested glued-on strip.

10. Smooth the join between base and lip

Use light finger pressure to round the base-to-rim transition and remove obvious sharp corners. If the manufacturer allows it and a spot feels surface-dry, a barely damp fingertip once may help smooth it-do not pour water or repeatedly soak the edge. If the brand disallows added water or the clay is already soft, do not moisten it.

11. Examine the wet outline and record actual size

Check gently from above and the side for evenness. Write actual or estimated outer length, width and rim rise, plus planned or visually judged floor/rim thickness. Record any wet splitting, sticking or slump. Do not pretend the unmeasurable floor thickness was measured exactly, and do not report a dry-size result for the wet object.

12. Keep the piece supported while it dries

Leave the tray on a manufacturer-compatible level surface with its base supported and an unobstructed, safe sheltered drying environment. Follow label advice for any turning or venting at suitable stages. Do not hold the rim tightly against a rigid bowl, place it in intense sun, blast with a fan, use an oven, handle it for strength tests or pull it off a surface if adhesion develops.

13. Observe only after maker-complete drying

Wait for the specific manufacturer's recommended full drying, not merely touch-dry. Then inspect the top and outer rim for cracks or warping without bending, pressing or filling with objects. Inspect the underside only if it can be done safely without breaking or stressing the sample. If not fully dry, mark PENDING, and do not paint, seal, carry or use it yet.

14. Complete records and clean safely

Complete the top-view form checklist, original dimensions, drying observations and limitations. Record visible cracks, curling, roughness and lack of actual weight/waterproof testing. Keep the tiny tray dry and safely displayed where it cannot be dropped, eaten or used for food or liquid. Collect solid scraps, damp-wipe residues and wash hands according to the maker's instructions. Nothing in this exercise certifies a functional dish or guarantees a crack-free finish.

Fix, care and preserve

The middle starts looking thin or fragile

Stop pressing; thick, consistent floor material matters more than preserving the illustrative oval's width. Gently redistribute wet clay, reduce the intended footprint or restart with adequate clay. Never puncture the middle to measure. A fragile-looking membrane is not a suitable success criterion.

The raised rim cracks during pinching

You may be bending a dry edge too abruptly, forming a sharp hinge, or exceeding the chosen clay's working time. If the manufacturer allows minimal surface moisture, use it sparingly; if cracking persists, reform as a shallower lip with rounded junction. Record the defect rather than hiding it with glue.

The edges curl or the base lifts while drying

Uneven thickness, moisture and contact surfaces can matter. Avoid hot forced-air drying and a sticking board. Follow the maker's guidance on changing support or turning only when the clay is firm enough; never pry a soft tray free with a sharp knife or clamp it over a rigid form.

The outside oval is not symmetrical

Perfection is not necessary. Compare against your paper guide without pressing it into the clay. A slightly irregular oval with consistent thickness is preferable to a precise-looking but wafer-thin rim.

You want to paint, varnish or waterproof the tray

Those are separate material-specific finishing projects, not part of this lesson. Wait for maker-complete drying before any allowed finish. Crayola explicitly warns that sealing its own air-dry clay does not make it waterproof; don't use an untested varnish to claim water or food safety. Do not use this as a soap tray, plant saucer, food dish, hot vessel or candle holder.

Dry clay dust or fragments appear

Never sand or brush airborne dry powder. If the manufacturer's safety guidance permits it, gently damp-wipe deposits and dispose of solid waste without flushing heavy sediment. Use dedicated craft cleaning and hand hygiene; keep small fragments away from children and pets.

Drying seems finished but the underside is uncertain

The underside may dry more slowly than the exposed rim. Mark PENDING and continue drying under the brand’s directions. Do not lift the work too soon just to photograph the bottom or force-bend to check hardness. Visible dryness is not a lab measure of full cure.

Pattern 1 - Original oval and thickness planning chart

In a TOP view sketch an outside oval approximately 10 x 8 cm and an inner oval approximately 8 x 6 cm; this leaves about 1 cm of nominal plan-view border at the wider ends, not a verified wall thickness. In a SIDE view, draw a low gently curved rim with a planned base thickness about 8-10 mm and side/rim material thickness about 8-10 mm, plus a low wall rise about 1-1.5 cm above the floor. Label all these values illustrative and manufacturer-dependent. Never trust PDF printer scale as a physical ruler; draw your own card with a real ruler and do not force the clay to match.

Pattern 2 - Shaping and supported drying path

Sequence on paper: soft clay ball thick oval blank broad shallow floor gradual continuous rounded lip supported maker-directed drying visual dry inspection. At each stage note where the floor becomes thin, rim splits, base bends, or clay sticks. The one-piece rim avoids a separate untested coil join, but this alone does not prove resistance to drying cracks. No tight rigid mould, sharp tool, hot air, varnish or food-contact test is part of the plan.

Record 1 - Shape and thickness guide

Feature | Illustrative starting guide | Observed or estimated

Exterior oval long axis | ~10 cm | _____ cm

Exterior oval short axis | ~8 cm | _____ cm

Inner shallow area | ~8 x 6 cm | _____ cm x _____ cm

Base thickness DURING SHAPING | ~8-10 mm plan only | Estimate _____ mm

Rim material thickness | ~8-10 mm plan only | Estimate _____ mm

Rim rise above floor | ~1-1.5 cm | _____ cm

Rounded base-to-rim transition | No sharp corner | Yes [ ] No [ ]

Cracks/splits before drying | Observe only | _____

Maker / brand and label thickness cautions: _____

Material was sufficiently soft for one-piece shaping? Yes [ ] No [ ]

Any maker-permitted fingertip moisture used? Yes [ ] No [ ] Not allowed [ ]

Record 2 - Drying and intended-use checklist

[ ] Known air-dry clay formula; its instructions read first.

[ ] Nonfood dedicated board and tools used.

[ ] Wide floor and softly joined low rim, no extreme thin flange.

[ ] Maker’s minimum thickness respected where observable.

[ ] No tight rigid mould or separate untested coil attached.

[ ] No radiator, oven, direct sun or high-speed fan drying.

[ ] Full manufacturer drying interval followed or PENDING recorded.

[ ] Top, edge and safe-to-view underside inspected visually.

[ ] Cracks, lifted base or warping recorded without stress testing.

[ ] No food, liquid, soap, real flame, hot object or load placed on tray.

[ ] Dry dust damp-wiped rather than sanded or brushed into the air.

[ ] Small pieces and craft tools stored away from kids and pets.

Drying started: _____ Full dry confirmed or pending: _____

Visible dry defects (if any): _____

Optional future improvement to shape/size: _____

I did NOT perform a weight/waterproof/food-safety test: [ ]

Sources, originality and honest proof boundary

These original Steadleaf Press text instructions, one-piece oval forming chart, side-profile thickness planning diagram and observation records are newly authored and illustrated. General manufacturer facts used as technical background, with no borrowed figures, third-party photos or source-prose copying:

- Crayola official FAQ, Why has my Air-Dry Clay piece cracked?
https://www.crayola.com/products/brands/scribble-scrubbie/faqs/why-has-my-air-dry-clay-piece-cracked-faq

- Crayola Canada, How long does it take for Air-Dry Clay to dry?
https://www.crayola.com/en-ca/faqs/how-long-does-it-take-for-air-dry-clay-to-dry-faq

- Crayola official FAQ, Can Air-Dry Clay pieces be sealed?
https://www.crayola.com/faqs/can-air-dry-clay-pieces-be-sealed-faq

- Crayola Canada, Air-Dry Clay product description:
https://www.crayola.com/en-ca/products/clay-and-modeling-compounds/crayola-air-dry-clay-white-575050

Limitations: No physical clay tray, measured wet or dry thickness, cracking trial, strength, resistance to stains, actual moisture exposure, waterproofing, food/heat safety, long-term durability or real print-scale check. Adult digital craft design only, not a tested manufacturing plan or guaranteed usable product.

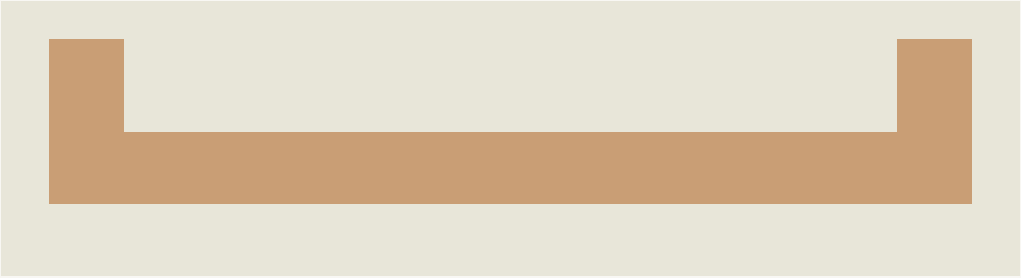
Original oval dimensions and thickness profile

Use a physical ruler: diagrams are NOT to print scale.

OUTER 10 x 8cm / INNER 8 x 6cm (illustrative)

Plan-view 1cm ring band != real material wall thickness.





Planned base/rim thickness 8-10mm; rim rise ~1-1.5cm.

Maker instructions govern ALL minimum thickness and drying.

Do not pierce the floor to measure; record estimates.

One-piece shaping then maker-directed drying



1. SOFT CLAY

One manufacturer-labelled pliable portion



2. THICK OVAL

Form blank without thin paper-like edges



3. SHALLOW FLOOR

Press gently, no punctures or deep cavity



4. LOW RIM

Raise in passes, round base-to-lip join



5. SAFE DRY

Support base; no heat, rigid mold or fan

No actual drying, crack-free claim, strength or waterproof testing.

Shape and thickness log

Clay brand/type: _____ Date: _____

FEATURE	PLAN	ACTUAL/EST.
Outer long axis	~10 cm	_____
Outer short axis	~8 cm	_____
Inner area	~8 x 6cm	_____
Floor thick (planned)	8-10mm	estimate ___
Rim thick (planned)	8-10mm	estimate ___
Rim rise	1-1.5cm	_____
Wet edge cracks	observe	_____

Floor thickness cannot be verified by piercing wet clay.

Drying, handling and safe-use checklist

- [ ] Read specific brand/clay formula instructions first
- [ ] Used craft-only board, not food-preparation tools
- [ ] One-piece oval with a broad, not thin, floor
- [ ] Rim raised gradually, with rounded inner join
- [ ] Maker minimum material thickness considered
- [ ] No rigid mould, oven, dryer, heater or direct sun
- [ ] Followed FULL manufacturer drying or noted PENDING
- [ ] Viewed cracks/warping without a stress test
- [ ] No food, liquid, flame, soap or heavy load added
- [ ] No unapproved varnish or waterproof claim
- [ ] Damp-wiped dry dust instead of sanding
- [ ] Kept tools, scraps and small tray away from pets/kids

Dry indoor decorative learning sample; never use for food or water.