

preferred to have a large, flat surface. What happens if they make a ball and then press it flat? What shape do they get?

Next, initiate a **modeling game**. The children will be given only **30 seconds** to make each object described below and squeeze them into a ball at the end of each 30-second period. The goal is to quickly make an object and take it apart, and then quickly make another object and take it apart. Count the 30 seconds for them as they work.

- **A leaf.** It can be any kind of a leaf. At the end of the 30 seconds, have the children evaluate their work by having a few describe the shape of the leaf.
- **A pine needle.** The children can practice rolling a long, thin coil.

Suggest that the children model the following objects flat on the table rather than forming them as 3-dimensional objects.

- **A whole pine tree.** Remind the students to think about the shape of a pine tree and to make the shape of the whole tree, not the shapes of the needles. If they need help, encourage them to flatten the clay and shape it into a triangle, adding a trunk at the bottom.
- **An oak tree.** Remind the children to think about the shape of the oak tree, itself. Can they put a flat circle together with a short trunk?

- **A big flower.** If the children are struggling with the construction of a flower, suggest they make five flattened circles and a small circle for the center, arranging the petals around the center and rolling a long, thin line for the stem. *They may need extra time for this one.*

- **A bird.** Refer to the picture display and help the children to see the basic shapes: a circle for the head, and a triangle for the body. Then let the children model the shape as they choose.

The exercises just described involve quick modeling rather than the careful, methodical modeling that is needed for a detailed finish. Children gain experience and knowledge by working and experimenting with materials. Hesitation or timidity that might result from a fear of failure or a desire to do things “right” can inhibit this experience; therefore, when exploring and experimenting is the goal, a timid approach can jeopardize learning. “Quick modeling,” which also includes many fresh starts, can be a relief to the hesitant child, since the thought of making something “permanent” is just too intimidating and can contribute to the need to do it “just right.” Therefore, several attempts at making and taking apart not only provide great learning opportunities, but also free the child of inhibitions that threaten the exploration process. Almost before they know it, the children are engaged in learning, gaining confidence as they go. After this ice-breaking period, they will be better able to experiment unguided.