Clay Feature Tutorial

This tutorial can be used to apply any type of “feature” to a vinyl doll. Keep in mind that baked clay will be NON-flexible whereas, vinyl will remain flexible.

In the following photos, I will be showing how to add a tongue to an Oliver kit, as well as, “fairy ears”. The Oliver kit, along with MOST kits currently produced, is a soft vinyl kit. So I have done the majority of painting on the head and I have also rooted the head before sculpting. I found that rooting AFTER I applied non-flexible baked clay was NOT a good idea. The fairy ears chipped around the edges where they were applied to the head. I have done fairy ears on Berenguer babies in the past with no problems. If the kit you are using is a harder vinyl, please feel free to add the clay before painting and rooting.

These should be baked at 275 F to cure the clay. DO NOT bake over 10 minutes because the vinyl will melt. Keeping your clay pieces thin will enable you to do this.

These are typically the tools and supplies that I will use to sculpt these additions.

Your doll head, your preferred clay and a form of liquid clay or clay adhesive.

On top, I have 2 different sized clay smoothers. Below that are 2 dental tools that I received FREE by just asking my dentist for any old tools that they were disposing of. (It was like Christmas that day!!!! You should have seen how many tools I walked away with – just for the asking!) Then lastly is my poor beat up Jack Johnston 3 in 1 tool.

Now if you are a beginner sculptor OR a reborner that doesn’t plan on sculpting much in the future, DON’T go spending loads of money on tools. I do recommend the smoothers because they are much smaller and more precise than your fingertips. But again, if you need some metal sculpting tools, take a visit to your dentist! 😊
A TONGUE FOR OLIVER!

I am going to show you how to sculpt a tongue for the Oliver kit like the original had. This is a fairly simple “sculpt” so even beginners can sculpt a tongue for their baby!

I am using Prosculpt clay just out of personal preference. Any oven baked clay can be used just remember to keep the sculpted clay to around a ¼” thick because you need to bake it ON the vinyl which can not remain in the oven over 10 minutes. You can also use AIR DRY clay if you don’t feel brave enough to bake your vinyl or if you are afraid your clay will crack while rooting.

Now I painted the inside of Oliver’s mouth and teeth. It is your personal preference if you would like to wait until after sculpting to paint. Just remember to stuff your head while rooting so that the head shape stays firm and the clay will not crack.

First, start off with a pea sized ball of clay. Roll it into a snake then form it into a long half circle. Squirt a line of Liquid Fimo along the back of the mouth.
Place the clay into the mouth behind the teeth – rounded side facing you. First I smooth down the clay behind the teeth. This is the hardest spot to get to, so we’ll start with that first. Smooth it to the floor of the mouth with the help of the Liquid Fimo. Once it is adhered, push on the top of the tongue so it lays just behind the teeth or slightly on top of the teeth (your personal preference).

Now you can start shaping it into a tongue form, smoothing the back up and onto the back of the throat. I then take the tip of my sculpting tool and make a definitive line in the back. Now smooth out the top of the tongue and around the edges. Make sure you leave room at both sides of the tongue.

Now you can try this little tip – if you would like some texture (taste buds) on your tongue, there are a few household items you can use: a piece of rough grade sandpaper or a stiff brush. I’m sure there are other items that you can find to use as well. I made my own little tool. I sliced a piece off a rough textured sanding sponge (local hardware store) and speared it onto a sculpting tool. VOILA!

VERY gently, press onto the top of the tongue and around the edges. Now, it’s ready to bake!
FAIRY EARS

The ears on the kit DO NOT have to be painted prior to sculpting but the surrounding head needs painted and rooting should be completed. I also stuff the head with something firm so that it doesn’t squish while I’m sculpting. (I use a dish towel!)

Since I have rooted the head already, I have placed Saran Wrap over the mohair so that I can keep it clean. Gather photos of the ears you wish to have. You can look up photos online at costume shops, movie sites (think Lord of the Rings), or other fantasy sites. Print some off to have on hand as reference.

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First, I start off by applying a small amount of Liquid Fimo to the top rim of the ear. You can use ANY type of liquid clay (Sculpey, Fimo, etc. – ALL available at your local craft shop that sells Sculpey or Fimo clays.) This acts like an adhesive to adhere the clay to the vinyl. There is also a “Bake and Bond” made by Sculpey that can also be purchased at your local craft shop. This is a bakeable adhesive for Polymer Clay. I have used both of these in the past for applying clay to vinyl.
Start by working the clay to a soft consistency. Taking about 1/3 of your ball of clay, roll out a “snake” about 2-3” long. Starting at the top front of your ear, place the snake of clay around the rim of the ear leaving about ¼” of the vinyl ear lobe showing. Pinch off any excess. This excess can then be rolled out again so that another “snake” can be applied to the top so you can form a nice little point. You can begin smoothing the clay with your fingers and/or a smoother to the ear. This gets a little messy because of the liquid Fimo but that’s OK, it will just adhere better plus we’ll clean it up before baking!

Smoothing the clay to the vinyl behind the ear can be the tricky point for some beginners. Just use a smoother or sculpting tool and smooth the clay up and onto the head. Smooth around the entire ear. Smooth the clay onto the front of the ear, adding more clay if needed.
Here is the bulk of the ear leaving just the ear canal uncovered. Now is when the fun begins!! Referring to the photos you printed off, start forming the ear to the final shape you wish it to be. There are just as many fairy/fantasy ears as there are human ears! Use your imagination and sculpt up whatever ear you can imagine!!

![Round Ears](image1.png) ![Pointy Ears](image2.png) ![Droopy Ears](image3.png)

Anything larger than the above ears, I would recommend using AIR DRY CLAY because remember you need to bake Oven Bake Clay in the oven for at least 10 min for ¼” of clay – Vinyl can’t withstand long doses of heat in the oven.

![Sculpting Process](image4.png)

Defining the sculpt….I typically start by forming the rim of the ear first. Following my photograph, I carve in a line following the shape of the ear. I use the smoother and make a more defined rim to the ear. After smoothing out the inside of the ear, you can decide if you want to put more definition in there as well. I sculpted in a little indentation to add more interest – so it’s not a plain ole ear! I also, curled up the tip of the ear as well. Smooth the clay as smooth as you possibly can. It’s much easier this way than trying to sand it after baking. Now is the time to “blend” the clay with the vinyl. I start by using a smoother then always end up using my fingertip. You want it as smooth as possible.
I then brush on Liquid Fimo around all edges where the clay meets the vinyl.

Do your “last checks” then start on the next one!!! An easy way I tell beginners to make the ears symmetrical is to take a photo of your finished one. Put it onto your computer, rotate it and now you have an exact photo to copy for the second ear!

Remember to bake at 275 F to cure the clay but keep pieces thin. DO NOT leave vinyl in the oven for longer than 10 minutes. Use air dry clay if you are unsure or have an expensive kit.

Good Luck!!!