The Process

a) The idea.

* The story is the most important part of the movie.
* Choose a topic or subject that you are interested in and develop the story line. One manner of story development is to start with the ending and work your way back to the beginning and along the way define the main idea of the story and what happens in the story
* Develop a character that fits your concept whether it be a football player, a dog, a dancer, or a taking telephone. Use your imagination but remember to keep everything simple the first time.
* Draw some sketches of your character - back, front, left and right side - including clothes and hair. Make some notes in regards to the most appropriate color scheme for the character.
* When you have a character in mind create a list of props that could be used and what type of background would be best suited for your animation. Some thumbnail sketches may help identify items that could be used.

b) The [storyboard](http://web.archive.org/web/20040325053420/http:/schools.spsd.sk.ca/mount/Hoffman/Animation/Clay/Storyboarding.html)

* Develop the story line
* Map out the movements of your character
* Illustrate what you want your character to do in relation to the set - props and background.
* Include reference notes

c) Tools

* Plasticine
* A plastic covered or formica work surface.
* Toothpicks for making small indentations for facial expressions.
* A rolling pin.
* Wire
* Other items that will help you sculpt be it a pencil, or ruler

d) Creating Your Character

* The best advice is just get started keeping in mind what your character is to look like.
* Start with basic shapes and work towards the final product which would include the finer details such as eyes, mouth, fingers, toes, eye color, hair.
* Create textures using your fingers or any everyday object such as spoons, knives, forks, nail files, toothpicks, etc.
* You can use pipe cleaners or wire as the framework on which to mold your clay. These products help give support and ease of movement to your character. It is important to note that movements should appear to be realistic and smooth.
* You may wish to use external supports (toothpicks) but remember these will have to be used in such a manner that they will not be seen when you start taking your pictures.
* Remember that your character will evolve during the sculpting process.

d) Designing the props and background

* Try and select props that are colorful and detailed
* The props selected should fit with the character and storyline that you are developing.
* The background should inform the viewer of the setting for your character - a room, a dance floor, in a sand box, or on a street.
* Do not select a background that overpowers your character.
* It is important to keep in mind proportions when developing the props.

e) Color and Sound

* Select colors that contrast.
* To make your character stand out use bright colors.
* Sound can provide the mood to your movie. If you character is doing a break dance you may wish to have this music as part of your animation and your character moving in time with the music If a door opens you may want the sound of a rusty hinge  
  .

f) Shooting The Movie

* A digital camera will be used to shoot each scene so it is essential that you become familiar with it.
* This is the longest part of the project and you must be very patient when doing this.
* It is recommended that you use a tripod for your camera and mark the position of your tripod noting height and angle because it is essential that all the shots are taken from the same spot.
* It is also recommended that you mark the position (referred to as reference points) of your character on the set so that it can be returned to exactly the same spot after you have made adjustments to it if you are showing the character running for example. Remember that you will be making small changes to indicate movement so it will be necessary to take a lot of pictures.
* Lighting is used to get rid of unwanted shadows and to make sure that your background is easily seen. The lighting you select dictates the mood presented and directs shadows to desired positions. If additional lights are used it is recommended that you include a backlight too prevent the washing out of your character and the background.
* To improve overall quality you may wish to try some other camera angles- taking camera shots from different positions. These can be integrated into your movie during the editing process.
  + The Long Shot - is used to establish a scene's setting or atmosphere.
  + The Mid -Shot - usually extends (on a person) from the foot to the head.
  + Close-up - extends from either the waist to the head or the shoulder blade to the hair.
  + The Real Close Up - usually of the face or a section of the face only attempting to maximize an expression possible.
  + High Camera Angle - creates a viewpoint that diminishes a subject or give a panorama and is taken with the camera at a position higher than eye level, looking down.
  + Low Camera Angle - .creates the illusion of a subject being larger or the sense that the character fees small in a tall environment and is taken with the camera at a position lower than eye level looking up.