Simple Armatures!

There are a million different ways to make armatures and every artist I know makes armatures in slightly different ways with different materials but they are generally all the same. This is one way to make them:

The size of the sculpture dictates the thickness of wire you use… the larger the sculpture, the larger the wire and vise versa. Traditional clay sculptors working in oil and water-based clays use “Armature Wire” which is aluminum; it comes in various thicknesses, is easy to bend and can be bent many times without breaking. You can use almost any wire that you like and will do your bidding!

**First make the “bone” structure with wire.**

Cut three lengths of wire: one will be the head and tail, one the right front and rear leg and one for the left front and rear leg.

Then attach them in the middle (where the tummy would be). I use many things to attach them but mostly I use a thinner gauge wire wrapped around several times and then twist the ends together.

Then pose the armature in the pose you want, you can cut the wires to make a shorter tail or change the height or length on the head/neck.

**Then put the “muscle” on by wrapping the “bones” with aluminum foil.**

Cut strips of aluminum foil in 1-2in widths and wrap around the wire tightly, fleshing out the figure to the size/shape you want. Try and make this as smooth as possible – it will help when you are sculpting over it with clay.

I find that the more solid and less wiggly the armature is the easier it is to sculpt over so keep everything as tight as possible!

Once happy with the foil shape I usually wrap the whole thing with floral tape to keep the foil in place and I find it smoothes it out a bit. A lot of people I know also use thin width masking tape for this step. (not pictured)

I also cover any exposed armature wire with tape – this keeps the aluminum from getting your claying hands dirty and helps keep clay directly on wire from cracking during baking, I am told.

Keep in mind the clay will add more bulk so your armature should be smaller / thinner than you want your final piece, this is particularly important for the legs and tail.

**Then you are ready to add the poly clay “flesh”.**

Cover the armature with clay and start sculpting!

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