

Japan's Mythical Foxes

In Western folklore, foxes are often seen simply as clever or sly animals. However, in Japan, the fox—known as *Kitsune* (pronounced keet-soo-neh)—holds a deeply spiritual and revered status. Since ancient times, they have been viewed as both sacred divine messengers and mystical, shape-shifting tricksters. When people wear a *Kitsune* mask in traditional rituals or festivals, it is believed to channel the spiritual power of these extraordinary creatures.

DISCOVERING THE KITSUNE MASK



The Cultural Roots

The Divine Messengers (Byakkoi): Across Japan, you will see thousands of shrines with fox statues adorned in red bibs. These are *Byakkoi* (white foxes), the sacred messengers of Inari, the Shinto deity of agriculture and business. Rather than gods themselves, they are guardians bringing blessings of abundant harvests, prosperous business, and family well-being.



Embodying the Spirits in Theatre: In Japan's traditional performing arts, such as *Noh* and *Kabuki*, these masks are not mere costumes. Actors wear them to literally transform into deities, spirits, or magical beasts on stage, bridging the human world with the spiritual realm.

Today, *Kitsune* masks are deeply loved in pop culture and modern anime (such as *Demon Slayer*).



15. Once fully dry, draw the fox face!!



10. Once the front of the mask is covered, apply the diluted glue before it dries, then add another layer of paper.
11. Let it dry slightly, then repeat the process: diluted glue → paper layer.
12. Repeat this step about five times to build several layers.
13. Let it dry completely.
14. When it is fully dry, remove the paper mask from the clay base together with the plastic wrap.

Let's make a Fox Mask!

1. Divide the clay into four pieces: one large piece and three smaller ones (one for the face, two for the ears, and one for the nose).
2. Flatten the large piece of clay to about 5 mm—1 cm thick to form the base of the face.
3. Crumple a piece of newspaper into a ball slightly smaller than the flattened clay. This will act as a temporary base.
4. Use the smaller pieces of clay to shape the ears and nose. Attach them to the face while lightly wetting the clay with water, so they stick well. Make sure the pieces are firmly connected so they won't fall off after drying.
5. Let the clay dry completely.



Material and Tools

- Air-Dry Clay
- Calligraphy Papers
- A few sheets of newspaper
- Glue
- Plastic Wrap
- Water Color Paints and brushes
- Scissors
- A small container

