
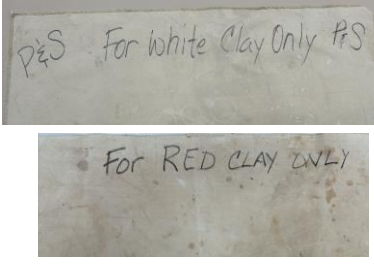




Getting Started: A Walk through Making a Clay Piece from Start to Finish

Wet clay	\	Greenware piece	\	Bisque firing!	\	Bisqued piece ready to glaze	\	Apply glaze	\	Glaze firing!	\	Finished piece
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<p>1) Choose your clay. White clays are easiest to begin with. Stony White and B-Mix are both popular, but Stony is a little easier for first projects.</p>	<p>Clays are sold (in the studio) in \$25 pound bags. You can use only clays sold in the studio.</p>		<p>If 25 lbs is too heavy to handle, purchase clay bags and divide your clay. The Supervisor can show you how.</p>
<p>2) Set up your work space. Spread a layer of newspaper on the table and place canvas over it. Choose canvas for white clays if your clay is white, canvas for red clays if your clay is dark.</p>	<p>Canvas is a useful work surface. Newspaper under the canvas picks up clay dust that would otherwise be left on the tables.</p>		<p>White clay</p> <p>Red clay</p>
<p>3) Open your bag and cut (with your wire tool) or pinch off a ball of clay for your piece. You may want to pinch it into a pot or make a slab to shape. You can also make a piece on the wheel.</p>	<p>For videos on how to make a pinch pot, see the end of this document. For an easy slab project, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5F1CDM-OrE (or search for "Patchaput Pressedplates"). Ask a Mentor or the Supervisor how to make a slab. The Supervisor can tell you where to find the supplies that you need.</p>		
<p>Mentors wear dark green aprons to signal that they are willing to be asked questions and offer help.</p>	<p>Mentors are not expected to give the equivalent of a class, but they are ready to help if you are stuck. The green apron says they are willing to be interrupted, so don't hesitate!</p>		

4) Make your piece.

If you can't finish it in one sitting, you will need to wrap it in plastic to keep it moist until you can return. Find a **ware board** (a simple wooden board, found under wedging tables) the same size as the piece, to place it on.

Pieces at this stage are called **greenware**.

They are very **fragile** and should be handled always with both hands. If you pick up a piece with one hand it could break.



Things to know about wrapping a piece in plastic:

If the piece is very wet, slide or place it on the wooden ware board and wrap plastic around the ware board and piece together; it will not be a problem if a little of the moisture is absorbed by the wood.

If your piece has dried a little, it should be easier to handle, and if you don't want it to dry any more, wrap it completely in plastic before placing it on the ware board.

Try not to press on any parts of the clay as you wrap it. Sometimes it is easier to set the piece on a ware board and then take a long piece of plastic or plastic wrap and go around and around the piece.

Plastic comes in all kinds of different thicknesses and levels of permeability.

Very thin plastic may not preserve as much moisture as you want, until you can work on the clay again. The best plastic is the plastic used in clay bags. Clay bags are sold in the studio, 2/\$1. Clay wrapped in these bags will lose virtually no moisture for days at a time. Other plastics are adequate for short periods, but if you have doubts about your plastic, use at least two layers.

If you want your piece to dry out a little, use a lighter plastic and wrap the piece more loosely.

Keep in mind that some pieces, especially plates, need to dry slowly to prevent warping.

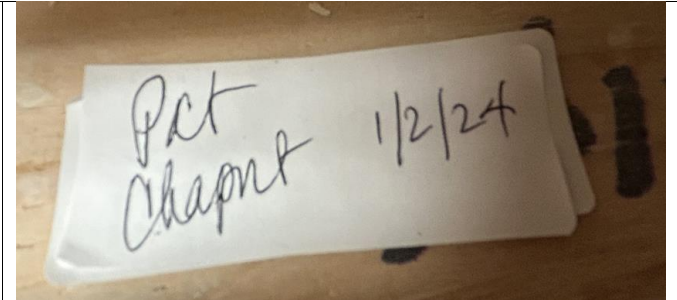
Learning the rate at which clay dries is almost entirely a matter of experience.

If you need a period of quick drying, you can put the clay outside (on a dry day) and check it ever 30 minutes or so. Clay in the Greenware Room dries slowly, while clay outside can dry too quickly!



5) Once your piece is wrapped, go to the Supervisor's island and get a white sticker. Write your name and the date, including the year, on the sticker and stick it to the ware board or the plastic. Writing your name (not initials) and date are very important.

It is not enough to have your name on your piece. It needs to be on the plastic or on the wareboard where it is visible to others. Sometimes someone will say, "Did you know that you have a piece on the shelves that has been there for over a month?" Every year dozens of pieces are forgotten and languish on shelves, taking up space or possibly getting broken. Every couple of months we have to search the shelves for forgotten pieces. Pieces without names may be discarded.



Writing your name and date on a sticker allows us to try to locate lost pieces for you, and clean out pieces that are no longer wanted.

6) Now carry your piece on the ware board to the **Resident Greenware and Drying Room**.

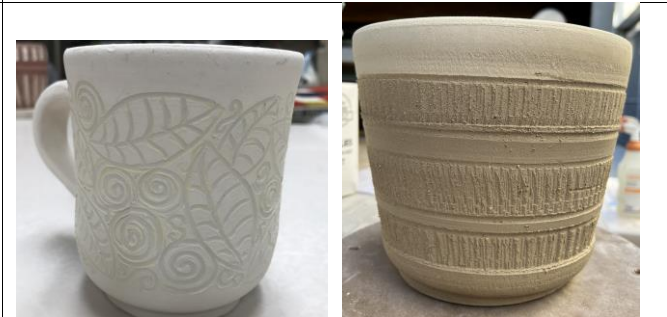
Find a space where your piece will fit—shorter shelves for flatter pieces, taller shelves for taller pieces. It is a good idea to take a picture of your piece on the shelf, to help remember what it looks like wrapped in the plastic.


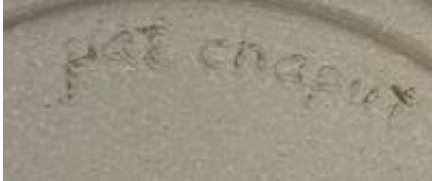

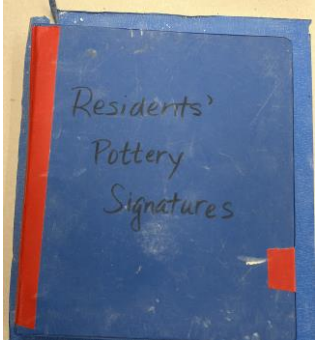
This room is used for storing *greenware* works in progress between work sessions, also for letting pieces dry once they are finished.





7) Check your piece for dryness. The first stage of dryness is called **leather hard**—not wet, but not completely dry. At this stage you can smooth edges, trim your piece, or make slight modifications.

At the leather hard stage you can carve into your piece; you can add handles to mugs or bowls; you can trim off extra clay; you can make many other modifications. **Hold the piece very gently**, as it is still wet and can easily be pushed out of shape.



<p>You might want to place it on a foam cushion rather than the hard table to work on it.</p>	<p>Find foam under the tool display cabinet near the Glaze Area, under the rolling pins.</p>	
<p>8) When your leather hard piece is the way you want it to look, SIGN IT on the bottom. Easiest is to use a dull pencil.</p>	<p>When you sign your piece, use the pencil to carve into the clay. A dull pencil carves fairly smooth lines. Press the pencil in deep enough that the lines are clearly visible.</p>	
<p>You can sign with your name, initials, letters and a symbol—whatever you like. But as attractive as an abbreviated signature (such as initials) might seem, keep in mind that your signature is primarily <u>for other people to identify your work</u>. The surest identification is your name. Using your name also will make it easier for your pieces to come back to you. Maybe you don't recognize your piece on the shelf, but someone else recalls seeing your name. Remember that pottery shrinks, glazes are sometimes unpredictable, and your piece might not look like what you expect! You will be surprised how often this happens! And initials may seem cool, but who remembers who they belong to?</p>		
<p>Once you have decided on your signature, fill out a card in the Blue Signature Book. Fill out the card according to the model in the front of the book. <u>Please follow the model.</u> How you fill out the card helps or hinders the people who sort out the pottery and put it on the shelves. Please help them by filling out the card as shown in the model. Don't hesitate to ask the Supervisor for help.</p>		

<p>9) Take your signed piece back to the Greenware and Drying Room to let it dry completely. You can keep it on a ware board or place it directly on a shelf, uncovered, to finish drying. You might want to cover it with plastic for a day to let it dry more slowly. It is still greenware.</p> <p>It will take 48 hours or more for a piece to dry, depending on size, thickness, and ambient humidity. At this stage it is <u>NOT ready</u> to be glazed. It is still greenware. <u>Glazing cannot be done on greenware.</u> First it must be bisque-fired.</p>	<p>The dried greenware piece will be lighter in color and lighter in weight; it will no longer feel cool by comparison with other dried green ware. If your piece is noticeably cold, it is likely not yet dry. If you are uncertain, you can ask a Mentor in a dark green apron or ask the Supervisor for an opinion.</p> <p>Your piece is still very fragile because it has not been fired.</p>	<p>The piece needs to reach the stage called bone dry before it can be placed on the carts for the first firing, the bisque firing.</p> <p>Bone dry pottery may look sturdy, even look like bisque ware (see below), but it is not at all sturdy. If you were to pick up a mug by the handle, it would probably break. If you were to set the piece in water, it would disintegrate. Always respect the fragility of greenware and handle it carefully with both hands.</p>
<p>10) Once your piece is bone dry, carry it to the Kiln Ready Room and put it on a cart against the green wall, to the left as you walk in the door. (Green wall for greenware.)</p> <p>The wall sign will say Bisque or 06.</p> <p>Your piece will now wait to be fired.</p>	<p>If you don't know where to go or which carts to use, ask the Supervisor.</p> <p><u>Remember to carry your piece with both hands</u> so it won't break; even though dry, it is very fragile!</p>	 <p>Greenware carts for bisque firing.</p>
<p>There are three sets of carts in the Kiln Ready Room.</p> <p>Carts against the green wall to the left of the door (photo above and right) are filled with pieces waiting to be bisque fired. Bisque firing is the first firing that removes moisture and prepares pieces to accept glaze. After this firing, pieces are said to be bisqued.</p>		

Carts on the wall opposite the green wall are for items that are glazed (or purposely left unglazed) and are waiting to be “high fired.” High firing, or cone 10 firing, vitrifies the clay and the glaze, turning it into glass and making it safe for oven, microwave, and dishwasher. **Never put a greenware piece on any of these carts! If there is no room on the bisque carts against the green wall, go ask the Supervisor what to do.** (Greenware put into a high fire kiln can explode!)

Pieces on carts in front of the entry door (and to the right as you enter the room) are for Emeritus classes. Do not put anything on these carts unless you are in an Emeritus class. Emeritus class teachers will explain what they want students to do.

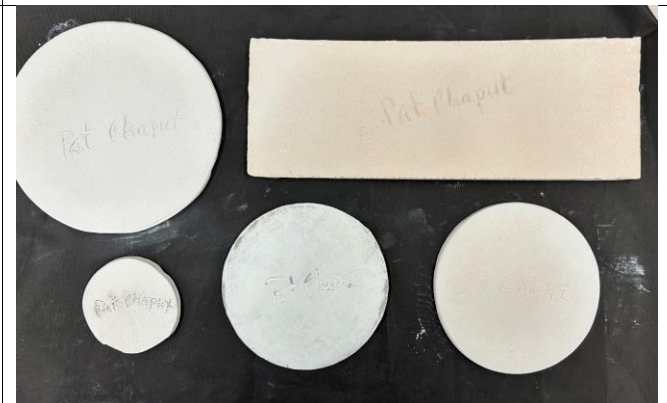


Glaze carts.

11) **Cookies!** While you are waiting, use the time to make kiln cookies for your pieces. See the separate information on **Cookies** to learn to make them.

In brief, for each piece that you glaze, you will make a clay disk, a “kiln cookie” to protect the kiln shelf from glaze drips and runs. If you are hand building, the best time to make your cookie is at the same time that you make your piece. For the cookie you will need to make a ¼” slab of clay and cut the cookie to be slightly larger (1/4-1/2”) than the foot ring or base of your piece. Ask the Supervisor if you are confused. You must have a cookie for each piece that you glaze; your cookie must be the right size and shape for your piece; and your cookies must be bisque fired, just like your pieces. If you make the cookie at the same time that you make your piece, you will be certain to have a bisqued cookie of the right size and shape when it is time to glaze.

Read about Cookies and how to make them so that you make them correctly.



12) The next step for you is to wait for your piece to be bisque fired. When there are enough pieces for a bisque firing, the Techs will wheel the carts with greenware into the Kiln Room and load the kilns. We try to put the dates of firings on the blackboard in the studio, but there is no fixed schedule because we have to wait until there are enough pieces for a firing.

This can be a frustrating time, as you will be eager to see your piece(s). But you can use the time to make more pieces **and more cookies!**

When cookies come back from their bisque firing they are placed in the cabinet to the right of the display window, in bins according to the first letter of the name on the cookie. If you don't see the cabinet, ask the Supervisor.



Cookies in cabinet.

The **bisque firing** removes moisture and produces a stiffer baked clay piece that is ready for glazing. The piece is still delicate, but it is stronger than greenware because it has been baked until it has lost its excess moisture. It is now ready to absorb glaze.



GREENWARE CANNOT BE GLAZED; IT MUST BE BISQUE-FIRED FIRST

STEPS: GREENWARE > 1st, BISQUE FIRING > PREPARATION FOR GLAZING > 2nd, GLAZE FIRING.

NEVER EVER GLAZE A GREENWARE PIECE. GREENWARE CANNOT BE GLAZED!!!

13) Wait until your bisque pieces come out and are put on carts, tables, or cabinets in the studio. **Pick up your piece(s).**

The time can be up to 3-4 weeks. Bisque firings take place approximately every two weeks, sometimes longer if there are not enough pieces for a full kiln load. It takes up to 3 carts of greenware for a full kiln.

A bisque firing takes several days while the kiln is loaded, the temperature is brought up high enough, and then the kiln is allowed to cool. Bisque firings usually alternate with glaze firings.

14) When your bisqued piece comes out it will be placed in the cabinet behind the blackboard schedule, with overflow on the tables
If you forgot to sign your piece, it will not be placed in the cabinet. Look for it on the table. Only signed pieces with recognized signatures go into the cabinet.
Cabinets are not for storage. Pack up your pieces and take them home!
The cabinet where your piece is first placed is for newly fired bisque ware only.

We encourage everyone to pick up pieces as soon as possible, but if you can't pick yours up and a week goes by, it may be moved one cabinet to the left. If another firing is expected, the first cabinet will be emptied out to make room for new pieces, and any pieces remaining will be moved to the left.






Cabinet far right: Emeritus classes
Cabinet behind blackboard: Bisqued pieces just out of kiln
Cabinet to left: Pieces from previous bisque firings, not yet picked up.

15) If your signature is absent or unclear, you will need to paint it on with an oxide.

Ask the Supervisor where the oxides are and use a small brush to paint your signature on the bottom.
Best oxide to use is Red Iron Oxide.



<p>Ready to glaze?</p> <p><u>16) Glaze training sessions</u> are currently arranged by Vivian Basing. Write to her at vivianbasing@gmail.com to let her know that <u>you have at least 2 bisqued pieces</u> and are ready for glaze training. Be sure you have two cookies of the appropriate size. Be sure you have read the Glaze Application Checklist, available in this packet and in the glaze area. If you can't find it, ask a Supervisor.</p> <p>Study the checklist before your training class. Write down any questions.</p> <p>Bring at least <u>2 bisqued pieces</u> to your class, ready to glaze, <u>plus the cookies for them.</u></p>		 <p>Vivian Basing</p>
<p>17) Bring your copy of the Glaze Application Checklist with your notes to the training session. Also bring your two bisqued pieces and two cookies.</p>	<p>Follow the instructions given in the glaze training class.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Glaze Application Checklist</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Find a cookie the right size for your piece. Be sure it does not have any glaze on either side of the cookie, and no cracks or bubbles. Make sure it is flat. If there are any of these problems, throw the cookie away. <input type="checkbox"/> Spread out newspaper in the area where you will work. <input type="checkbox"/> Use a damp sponge to clean your piece and let dry. Do not submerge or wash your piece as glaze will not adhere to a wet piece. <input type="checkbox"/> Check the posted chart to see if the glaze you have chosen is runny. That will affect how much space from the bottom of your piece you will need to keep clear of glaze so that the glaze will not run down onto the cookie or kiln shelf. 	
<p>18) You will not glaze your entire piece; the bottom of the piece, where it rests, must be left entirely free of glaze.</p> <p>2 techniques:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Wipe the bottom including at least ¼" of the vertical wall at the bottom. b) Use wax to cover the same area, making the surfaces easier to wipe. 	<p>Under the high firing temperatures your glazed piece will vitrify, or turn into a glass-like ceramic material. When it vitrifies in the kiln it will stick to anything that touches it, including the kiln shelf or anything else that it rests on. (Kiln shelves are expensive, around \$100 each.)</p>  <p>This glaze ran onto the shelf and the pot stuck.</p>	
<p>You MUST leave the surfaces that the piece rests on, as well as part of the vertical wall, free of glaze.</p> <p>If your piece has a flat bottom, the entire flat bottom and part of the wall must be free of glaze.</p> <p>If your piece has a foot ring, the foot ring must be free of glaze.</p>	<p>If your piece were to stick to the shelf or a cookie, it is likely to break when you try to remove it.</p> <p>Pieces most commonly stick when glazes run; you always want to leave enough space between the bottom edge of the glaze and the bottom of your piece to ensure that your pot does not stick.</p>  <p>This flat-bottomed piece stuck to the cookie because the glaze ran down too far (onto the cookie). When the cookie was removed, part of the piece came with it.</p>	

19) To protect the kiln shelf from glaze dripping onto it, you **must USE A COOKIE UNDER YOUR PIECE.**

See the information on using cookies, available in this packet or on the website. After a piece has been glazed, the bottom of the piece must be cleaned and the piece glued to a cookie to catch any drips.



If an old cookie has been freshly kiln-washed, do not glue the piece to the cookie (see Cookie information for specifics).

This pot stuck to a cookie; the cookie saved the kiln shelf



20) Once your piece has been glazed and glued to its cookie, place it on one of the carts on the far side of the Kiln Ready room.


Then you wait.



21) When there are sufficient pieces for a glaze firing, your piece will be fired.

It takes about 2 ½ cartloads to fill the kiln for a glaze firing. Again, it will take several days for the kiln to be loaded, brought up to temperature, and then cooled down and unloaded.



<p>19) When pieces come out of the glaze kiln they are placed in cabinets specifically for glaze ware, to the right of the Extruder. The righthand cabinet is for pieces from the last glaze firing.</p> <p>As with bisque ware, if pieces are not picked up before the next firing, they are moved one cabinet to the left.</p>	<p>If you do not see your piece, check the “Reject Shelves” in the Kiln Ready Room (the white shelves on the wall between the bisque and glaze carts). Pieces with problems will be placed there with a note as to the problem.</p> <p>Common problems include the cookie being the wrong size or shape, or glaze too thick and clearly liable to run.</p>	
<p>20) When you pick up your piece it is ready for use. It can be used for eating, baking in an oven or in a microwave, washed in a dishwasher or by hand. <u>Do not put your piece directly on stovetop burners.</u></p>	<p>Do wash or wipe your piece before use to remove any ash or dust from the firing process.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Enjoy!</p>	
<p>Congratulations! You have made a piece from start to finish! From a lump of clay to a functional pot!</p>		

Pat Chaput
Revised January 10, 2024

Pinch Pots: The Simplest Type of Pot You Can Make (and with no experience!)

How to Make Easy Pinch Pots – You Tube (Long video but maybe the best!)



[How to make a Pinch Pot - YouTube](#)



[How to Make a Pinch Pot | Step by Step Clay Tutorial](#)



[How To Make A Pinch Pot - YouTube](#)



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