

Some Pottery Lingo

Here are some terms you will hear in a pottery studio:

Wedging - a lot like kneading dough. Blending the clay for even distribution of moisture and ridding the clay of air pockets. You can never do this enough.

Kiln – heating unit in which the clay is fired.

Leather hard - when the clay is cool and dark. It is stiff but not completely dry. Ideal time to trim or tool.

Green ware - before the clay has been fired. Usually it is dry, and very fragile. If soaked it will return to its original state.

Bisque firing - the first time the clay is fired it becomes hardened and porous, ready to accept glaze. The firing changes the composition of the clay. A bisque-fired pot will not disintegrate when encountering water.

Glaze ware – bisque ware is glazed and fired again at a higher temperature resulting in a non-porous, vitrified ceramic body, usually covered with a layer of glaze creating a glassy surface.

Some Pottery Tips

When you are first getting to know clay, it is most important that you follow a few basic rules. Once you know clay a little better, you may be able to break some of these rules and still meet with success.

Is my clay too dry?

Clay should not stick to the hands. You should be able to roll a piece of it into a coil and bend it into a ring shape without cracks forming.

Clay **shrinks** when it dries. In order to avoid cracking, two pieces of clay to be joined together should be close to the same dryness as possible. Once clay is so dry that it no longer deforms when pressure is applied, it is too dry to join other clay to it.

When joining leather hard clay to leather hard clay or wet clay to leather hard clay, score (scratch) and apply thick slurry to the surfaces to be joined. Slip or clay slurry is clay that has been mixed with water to a thick creamy consistency. Sometimes a bit of sugar in the slip helps when doing repairs. Push the sections firmly together overlapping clay from one surface to the other whenever possible. When slab building, reinforce the inside of seams with a thin coil.

Anytime you are applying pressure to one side of a form during construction, support the opposite side of the form with your other hand.

When possible, construct forms of equal thickness throughout to avoid problems caused by uneven drying and thus uneven shrinkage. Forms with attached sections (such as mugs with handles) should be dried slowly under plastic to avoid cracking and separation.