

CLAY PREPARATION AND RECYCLING

Technical Tips And
Product Information

#03

COMMERCIAL CLAY IS DE-AIRED AND IN SEALED PLASTIC BAGS

This means that kneading/wedging is not required BUT there are reasons for kneading/de-airing. For example, kneading before throwing will ensure that the clay particles move in a circular direction assisting centreing and "loosening" the clay.

MOIST BAGGED CLAY - INDEFINITE SHELF LIFE DEPENDING ON STORAGE

Store in a cool place out of direct sunlight. Resist poking fingers into the bag and do not carry clay bags by the heat seal ensuring moisture is retained in unsealed bags.

ALL COMMERCIAL CLAY IS EXTRUDED FROM A LARGE PUGMILL/EXTRUDER

Meaning it has "stress" from the anger blades down the centre of the block which is

- (a) apparent in slabs cut directly from the block
- (b) will open up when drying
- (c) require kneading before making into a slab

WHEN RE-USING CLAY

Store in a well-sealed soft plastic bag i.e. garbage bag. Squeeze the air out and seal with a knot. Use a misting spray bottle to replace the moisture extracted from handling the clay.

IF CLAY BECOMES TOO FIRM

Slice into 1cm slabs (like bread slices) and dip each one into water before stacking into a plastic bag. Allow to sit for 1-2 days, then knead into shape. This is the best way to recycle.

BE CAREFUL WHAT SURFACE YOU KNEAD ON

Plaster slabs and cement sheets are fantastic for drying moist work but they take too much moisture out of the kneaded clay. An unsealed timber table is ideal. NEVER USE GLASS OR LAMINEX SURFACES.

AVOID RECYCLING DRY CLAY BY NOT CREATING DRY CLAY WASTE

Stop the drying process while the clay is firm but not dry and you'll spend less time and effort doing this dreary job.

TO FULLY RECYCLE CLAY YOU WILL NEED

- (1) Plastic buckets
- (2) Plaster batts
- (3) Pugmill (or lots of kneaders)
- (4) Plastic bags
- (5) Space indoors for set up

TOTALLY DRY CLAY IS THE EASIEST TO RECYCLE

Fill a bucket with clay and cover with water. There will be a hissing/fizzing sound as the dry clay takes up the water. When the water is absorbed it will be a thick slip mix. Place on plasterbatts or a plaster-kneading bench until firm enough to handle for kneading/pugging.

IMPORTANT- PLASTER IS THE ENEMY OF FIRING

It's important that small pieces of plaster do not make their way into recycled clay. Once heated, they will explode/spit out in the kiln causing disastrous effects on pottery. This occurs when clay is scraped off plaster batts ready for kneading/pugging.

RECYCLED MIXTURES OF DIFFERENT CLAYS

These should only be fired at EARTHENWARE temperature (1100°C) unless every component of the recycled mix is a stoneware temperature body (i.e. stoneware or porcelain).