

# SLIP CASTING

Technical Tips And  
Product Information

#04

## SLIP PREPARATION – COMMERCIAL SLIP

- Ensure the slip is thoroughly stirred using a long stick at least 1" wide (paddle) for approx. 4 minutes.
- Always stir to the bottom of the bucket.
- Ensure your slip is the correct type (earthenware, stoneware, mid-fire, porcelain, terracotta)
- Stinky/Smelly is desirable for plasticity but the odour can be masked with a little household bleach (25ml/per 10L bucket of slip).
- Ensure that no "clags" of leather hard, dry slip go back into the casting bucket.
- Always keep lid on the bucket when not in use – even during casting.

## MOULD PREPARATION

- New moulds should initially be sponged lightly before use.
- All moulds must be completely dry before use.
- If older moulds develop white fur, it should be brushed off with a dry, coarse paintbrush before casting.
- The "face" of each mould should be perfectly clean (free of old clay, dust etc.) – sponge if necessary (the day before casting).
- Place mould sections together, strap and hold up to the light – if you can see the daylight, the mould is not properly fitted together (check for stray bits of clay on the locking devices "natches").
- Each mould has a life of approx 100 casts. Past this, they will lose detail and the seams enlarge.

## CASTING

- Place all prepared moulds on a bench. Take a large jug and pour casting slip into the jug (rather than dipping the jug into the bucket).
- Fill the mould by pouring the casting slip slowly into the bottom (not down the walls). Top up till meniscus forms.

- Sit the mould for an appropriate time until the firm slip (cast) forms up on the inside walls of the mould (approx. 30 minutes). Casting times vary according to weather, mould condition etc.
- Empty excess slip out of the mould into the original slip bucket (preferably through a 30-40# sieve).
- Invert the mould to drain at an angle.
- Approximately 1 hour later, turn the mould up and use a plastic picnic knife to trim the "spare" (excess clay at the top of the mould shape). Do not use a metal knife because you will damage the mould.
- Take the bands/straps off the mould, lie the mould on one side, carefully lift off the top half of the mould evenly without ripping the cast apart.
- Keep the cast sitting in half of the mould for a further 15 minutes before completely removing the cast from the mould.
- Re-band/strap the mould and continue casting or keep mould parts separate to dry until next use.

## CLEANUP

- "Fettle" (trim) the joins off the cast to remove the "seams" – a metal bladed knife is fine for this.
- Trim the "spare" (excess) at the opening to the cast to achieve a suitable even finish.
- Sponge "seams" and "spare" using clean water and small sponge till smooth.
- Allow to dry as for any other pottery item.
- If using 2 different temperatures/types of casting slip, it's a good idea to colour one with food colouring to identify them. It can also help if each piece has E/W, S/W, M/F etc. engraved on the bottom.
- Glaze and decorate as appropriate for the slip type.