

PLANNING YOUR PIECE

- Mark the base of your work with your name and clay type (code).
- The ideal maximum thickness for hand built pottery is 1-1½ cm. Radical variations in the thickness of pottery items will promote uneven heating and therefore, cracking. Keep checking the thickness of your piece as you go and rectify unevenness before the piece dries hard.
- Very thick or solid pottery is hard to dry fully and will not fire successfully (i.e. it cracks, explodes) due to trapped moisture heating and expanding inside the work.
- Make sure your work will fit into the kiln or on the kiln shelves.

DRYING YOUR WORK

- Cracking will commonly occur in drying if
 - (1) There are a number of joins
 - (2) It is a larger piece, or
 - (3) There is an uneven or variable thickness
- Drying can be slowed by placing pieces into a plastic bag and leaving for up to 2 weeks for slow and even drying.
- Never 'rapid dry' clay because it has a memory for the stresses which are created during making and these, coupled with uneven drying, can cause major disasters.
- Never expose drying pottery to extreme cold or hot or variable conditions (i.e. never leave near frosty windows in winter or draughty doorways in hot summer).

FIRING

- Never fire moist pottery!
- Always know your clay type and glaze type – is it earthenware, mid-fire or stoneware/porcelain? The clay bag or glaze bottle will tell you. Always use earthenware glaze with earthenware clays, stoneware glaze with stoneware clays etc.

- Never put glaze on the bottom of pots. Start glaze ½ cm up from the base of the pot; this ensures that there is no chance of excess glaze running and sticking your work to the kiln shelves.
- Always read the application instructions on glazes and underglazes and follow the manufacturer's recommendations. Do not over fire glazes.
- Always fire slower if in doubt about the firing rate required for your piece (approximately 50°C/hr is a good conservative rate).

TRANSPORTING UNFIRED POTTERY

- Newspaper is not always a good wrapping product for transporting unfired pottery because it can often damage fragile work.
- Pizza boxes are very useful for transporting slabs/plates/flat ware.
- Stockings filled with sawdust can be useful packing. So can straw, shredded newspaper, fabric scraps etc.
- Never pack layer upon layer of pottery into a box unless the largest and heaviest work is at the bottom and lightest at the top.
- Only transport pieces in rigid boxes, not flexible ones that allow the work to move and break.

TRANSPORTING FIRED POTTERY

- Use bubble wrap, newspaper, towels and quality, robust packing materials. Ensure the packing box is packed tight with work so that nothing moves in transit. Making a fake wall inside a packing box is helpful in taking any knocks in transit.
- Do a google search for professional packers if sending work overseas etc. They will use wooden crates and specialty spray foam products to surround odd shaped works.
- Insure your work!