



Clay Terminology

Bisque- A term used to describe pieces that have been through the first firing. Also refers to the first firing before the glaze firing.

Bone Dry- When the clay is completely dry and all the water has evaporated.

Clay Body- A mixture of clay materials that are combined to provide a particular color, maturing temperature and workability. Examples are porcelain, stoneware and earthenware.

Earthenware- A category of clay that is fired at a low temperature (below cone 4) .

Firing- The process of heating clay work in a kiln. Firing transforms the clay to a rock like state and melts glazes.

Greenware- Unfired Pottery .

Glaze- A Silicate (glass-like) material that is applied to the clay and melts into a coating when fired.

Kiln- An oven in which the clay is fired.

Kiln Wash- A mixture painted on top of kiln shelves to protect the shelf from glaze drips or runs.

Leather Hard- When the clay has dried enough to where is it still pliable but strong enough to handle (i.e. you can easily make a nail mark, but can not easily make a fingerprint in the clay).

Maturation- The ideal condition of fired clay. It is as hard as it can be while still be able to hold its form.

Oxidation Firing- A firing in a kiln where the oxygen enter the firing chamber is free to interact with the glazes. There is plenty of oxygen present for the fuel to burn.

Porcelain- A category of clay that is pure white when fired.

Pyrometric Cone- A cone is used during the kiln firing to gauge what temperature the kiln is. When the kiln reaches a certain temperature, the cone melts and bends over.

Reduction Firing- A firing in a kiln where the amount of oxygen entering the chamber is lessened and this atmosphere influences the color of the clay body and glazes.

Refractory- Can withstand high heat; resistant to heat

Score- To score clay, one can use their pin tool, scoring tool, or serrated rib to roughen the surface of the clay in order to attach leather hard pieces together.

Slip- Clay made fluid by adding water. Can be used to add decoration to a piece, or to attach two pieces of clay using the score and slip method. This happens at the leather hard stage.

Stoneware- A category of clay that is fired at higher temperatures (above cone 4)

Underglaze- A commercially made product that can be applied to green ware or bisque prior to glazing. It has a matte finish.