

Clay Instructions

Clay can feel intimidating if you've never done it before. We have all been there and are here to help. You will need to set up two lessons with your teacher. **The first lesson** will be to mold the project. You and your teacher will need to schedule a lesson time for the month *before* your firing month. So, for example, if you are scheduled to fire in February you will want to mold your project sometime in January (even before January would be fine, but you won't get to fire your project until your assigned month, February in this case). **The second lesson** will be to glaze the project. You will set that up for a few days after you have done your first fire. The kids love it when it is there turn to do clay. Be sure to have fun with it, work with the teacher (sometimes they have a project in mind already) and try to keep the projects fairly simple.

Clay Supplies

Clay is kept in the kiln room. You may use ½ sleeve per class.

The Kiln room key is kept with Terri in the office. Be sure the kiln room doors are locked when you leave and return the key to Terri when you have finished.

The tools are kept in the supply room including the wire cutter used to cut the sleeves into smaller pieces, rolling pins and various tools to make patterns, shapes and designs.

The glazes, paint brushes, and small bowls can also be found in the supply room.

Tips for successful projects

Clay can be a little messy so use the sheets in the supply room to cover the desks. The sheets work well because the clay doesn't stick to it and the sheets can be shaken out after they dry. Clay mats can be found in the supply room too and should be cleaned after use.

The students should be instructed to keep their projects between ½ and ¼ inch thick. Too thin and the clay will be fragile and can break, too thick and the clay won't dry and may break during firing.

Simple one piece projects are the best. However, if the project you choose has pieces you can attach pieces of clay together with scoring and slip (clay/water mix). The kids will probably need help with this. The more pieces you attach the more pieces you have to keep track of. Be sure the pieces are well attached before you set them away to dry.

Clay can be molded with hands or rolled out with rolling pins. The more it is worked the drier it gets.

Clay tools can be used to engrave clay, make designs, patterns and textures. There are also a variety of cookie cutters and even stamps available.

Use small amounts of water to smooth the cracks out.

After the first lesson

Clay projects need to be set aside to dry for **one week** before they are fired for the first time (bisque fire). If the projects are not dry they may break in the kiln.

Do not transport clay projects on the carts, as they may crack, break or tumble off. Containers for transporting your clay are available in the kiln room. Please return them when your class has completed their project.

Return all unused clay in a sealed bag, sprinkle with a little water, and pound back together (a bag full of pieces will dry out).

Once the pieces are fully dried they can be fired. Be sure to check with the Clay Coordinator to set your firing time.

Return all clay tools to the supply room cleaned and ready for the next person to use.

If you used the supply room to cut the clay, be sure to clean the counters off thoroughly.

Bisque Fire

After the pieces have dried for at least a week they can be loaded into the kiln the morning of your scheduled firing day. **The kiln needs to be started by 9am.**

The first time you fire you do not need to use the funny little risers and its ok if the pieces touch.

Follow the posted instructions and start the kiln.

Return later the following day or early the second day after firing to unload your project. The pieces are often too hot to unload the morning after.

Sometimes, when you go to load your projects you will find that the previous person's class project is still in there. We all get busy and sometimes forget. Carefully remove the project and set it on the shelves.

Glazing

After the projects have been through the bisque firing they are ready to be glazed.

You will need paintbrushes, glaze, cups for the glaze, newsprint to cover the desks and a little water for rinsing brushes.

Set up painting stations (3-4 colors in small bowls or Dixie cups). Please use the glazes responsibly and pour any unused glaze back into the bottles.

Shake glaze bottles well.

DO NOT GLAZE THE BOTTOM OF THE PROJECTS! The glaze will stick to the kiln shelves or risers and damage the projects. If you forget try to clean the bottom off the best you can with a damp paper towel or a wire brush found in the with the clay tools.

Paint clay with 2 moderate coats of colored glaze allowing each coat to dry (glaze looks chalky when dry)

Finish with one moderate coat of clear glaze (this glaze will look chalky pink when dry). The clear glaze will make the project shiny. The kids always get worried when their project looks pink after all the time they took with the colored glaze. Reassure them that the pink will come out clear after it has been fired. We recommend adding the clear glaze yourself after the lesson for the younger grades (k-2) to avoid any student concerns.

If you have any small pieces that have fallen off this is a good time to try to reattach them the glaze can sometimes work like glue.

Let the glaze dry for about an hour before firing.

Clean and return all brushes, containers, glaze and any other supplies.

Glaze Firing

When you load the kiln this time you need to balance the pieces on the funny little risers that are in the box under the shelves in the kiln room. The risers keep the glaze from melting onto the shelving.

Keep the pieces spaced enough so that they do not touch.

Follow the glaze firing instructions posted in the kiln room.

Remember to load and **start the kiln by 9am** on your scheduled firing day.

Do not try to empty the kiln the next day. The pieces will be way too hot.

One last note

While you are sculpting and firing feel free to use the containers and shelves for transport and drying. Upon completion please be sure to clear out your project and leave the area clean for the next group to use.

If you have any questions,

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2015-16 CLAY SCHEDULE

GRADE	SCULPT	FIRE/GLAZE FIRE
4 TH	October	November
6 th	November	December
5 nd	December	January
3 rd	January	February
1 st	February	March
2 nd & Mid-Level*	March	April May (odds & ends)

*Mid-Level can sculpt whenever convenient for them. I will fit their pieces into the kiln when availability allows.